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AFRICAN ART

from the
Richard Kempshall Meyer
Collection

LAKEVIEW CENTER for the ARTS and SCIENCES • PEORIA, ILLINOIS

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from the
Richard Kempshall Meyer
Collection

catalog prepared by

Dr. Catherine H. Ricciardelli

and

Virginia Najmi

February 11 to March 25, 1973

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Acknowledgments

It is with much pleasure that I share my interest in the cultures of Africa exemplified through their forms of traditional art.

In the process of acquiring the collection and preparing a portion of it for exhibition and presentation in this catalog, I find that many friends and associates have unselfishly provided help and expertise — to each of them I wish to acknowledge my debt of appreciation. Dr. Alan R. Sawyer aroused my interest in the art and culture of Africa initially and has contributed to my growing appreciation of it. James M. Silberman has provided valuable assistance in many ways, particularly by identifying items in the collection and sharing his knowledge of African art. Without the aid of Saja Tunkara this collection would not have been possible. Most especially, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Kay Ricciardelli and Mrs. Virginia Najmi for diligently researching the collection, preparing the text of the catalog, and sharing my enthusiasm for the project. Thanks are also due Miss Mary Murphy who helped to research the Ashanti gold weights.

I am indebted to Fred Jolly for his excellent photography, to Caterpillar Tractor Company for assistance in preparing pictures, to Lowell Adams who designed the catalog, and to Glen Novakow for help and advice in its preparation. My sincere thanks go to the Lakeview Center staff, to Eldred Davis who helped to install the exhibition and to Dr. Daniel J. Crowley whose African fabrics enhanced the display.

Finally, I deeply appreciate the interest and encouragement of my family, especially my wife Mary, in my pursuit of African art and their tolerance with my absorption in it.

Richard Kempshall Meyer
Peoria, Illinois
February 1973

Introduction

The Richard Kempshall Meyer collection of traditional African sculpture marks the addition to the art resources of Peoria of one of the more important and comprehensive private collections in the midwest. This exhibition, which includes representative selections from the Meyer collection, gives both museum visitors and professionals in this field of art and ethnography an opportunity to grasp the quality and scope of the full collection.

Including examples from most of the sculptural traditions of the many peoples of the Niger river basin, the acquisition of the art works reflects a major interest in the largest and artistically most varied population group, the tribes of present day Nigeria. The sculptures range from works of architectural magnitude, through major examples of 19th century figure and mask carvings, to artistically rendered household objects. Seldom-seen works are included from smaller and more remote tribes, not frequently to be found in even major museum collections. There is, in addition, some representation of the Congo-based cultures.

Most museum visitors are familiar with the "discovery" of African sculpture by the Post-Impressionist and Fauvist artists centered in Paris, and by the Expressionist painters of Germany and Scandinavia. The widespread impact of the African sculptural tradition on contemporary art is also generally recognized, but the profound and continuing nature of this influence has yet to be revealed.

But the fervor of the decades of 1930 through 1960 for the Post-Impressionist and subsequent artistic movements is past now. The initial interest enkindled by the French tradition in African sculpture also has been long spent. Yet, in contrast to the declining influence of this impetus given by the French tradition, increasingly greater preoccupation with African sculpture is evidenced year by year. Unprecedented numbers of exhibitions follow each other in all parts of the world. Art books on African sculpture proliferate. Study programs in universities and colleges are now frequent. The number of collectors of African art has increased dramatically and has left far behind interest in other sculptural traditions and other fields of primitive art. The archeology of Africa has been finally launched in earnest and may draw interest in the next decade or two analogous to that in the Egyptian Tutankhamen excavations of the 1920's.

What are the reasons for this increasing interest? They include apparently more than a recognition of the cultural heritage of the Black people, important as it may be to this nation, since the new interest extends to many age and population groups and spans many nations. Perhaps the answer in part is that the Western world has increasingly learned to accept and interact with the African sculptural tradition on its own intrinsic merits. And in doing so, we have grown to recognize the stature, the depth, and the diversity of a great sculptural tradition which requires no introduction or assistance from contemporary art movements. We have come from the point of a derived aesthetic appreciation based on parallelisms with modern art to a widespread recognition of the unique and original qualities of the African tradition.

Assembling a collection is a slow and difficult process, presenting challenges and risks. Innumerable decisions must be made in selecting what is to be acquired and what rejected. Each decision records a mark on the perceptiveness and success of the collector, reflected permanently in the collection itself. Mistakes are always costly, both in funds and in ego.

But the Meyer collection speaks for the success of this effort. By any measure it is a significant and rewarding assembly of art works.

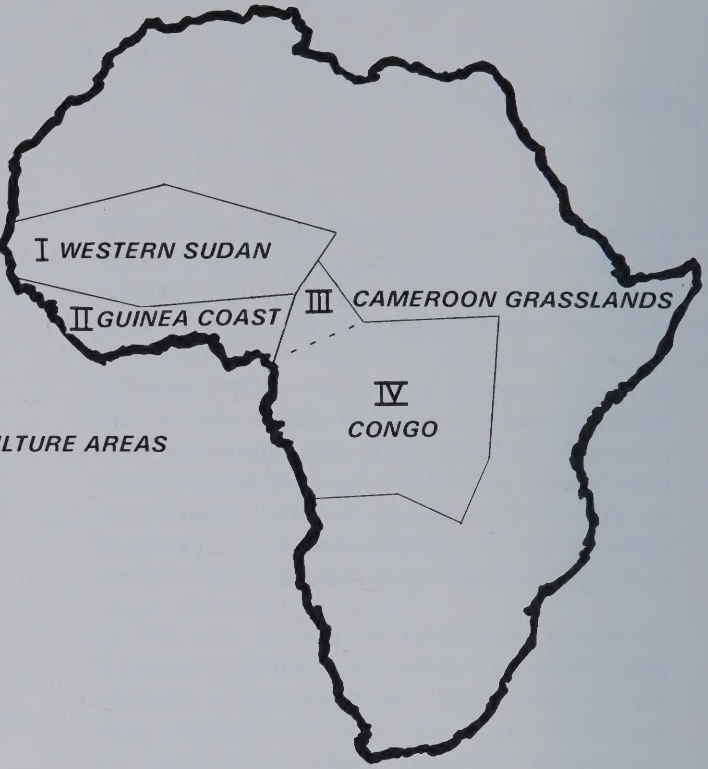
There are numerous works of major quality, dating from among the earliest 19th century examples in museum possession, such as the Yoruba altar figures, Epa masks, ceremonial stools, divination objects and staffs. There are fine examples of Benin and Chamba art. The collection is relatively rich in tribal examples not well represented elsewhere, as in the specimens of Tiv, Igbira, Idoma, Ibo and Ogoni art. Ashanti art is comprehensively covered in both goldweight and funerary art forms.

Examples of noteworthy quality will also be found in other tribal art, including most of the traditions of the Cameroons. Further north, the Baga are well represented, with significant specimens from the Mende, the Bambara, and the Dogon.

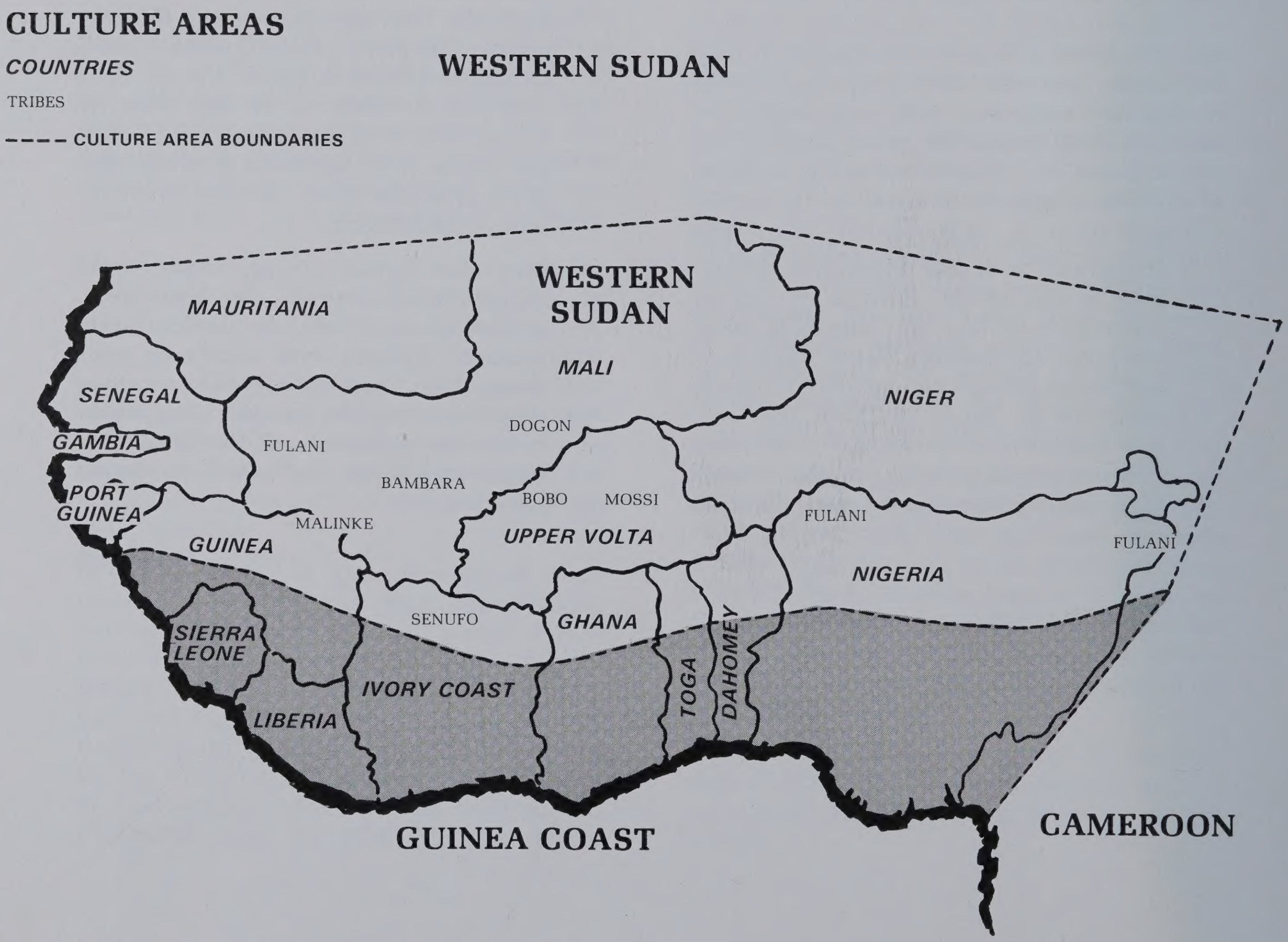
But the viewer will judge for himself. It may be timely to recall how present concepts of African sculpture were anticipated as early as 1920 when the great English art critic, Roger Fry viewed an early showing of African sculpture in London. He wrote:

> *We have the habit of thinking that the power to create expressive plastic form is one of the greatest of human achievements, and the names of great sculptors are handed down from generation to generation, so that it seems unfair to be forced to admit that certain nameless (artists) have possessed this power not only in a higher degree than we at this moment, but than we as a nation have ever possessed it. And yet that is where I find myself. I have to admit that some of these things are great sculpture - greater, I think, than anything we produced even in the Middle Ages. Certainly they have the special qualities of sculpture in a higher degree. They have indeed complete plastic freedom; that is to say, these African artists really conceive form in three dimensions. Now this is rare in sculpture. All archaic European sculpture - Greek and Romanesque, for instance - approaches plasticity from the point of view of bas-relief. The statue bears traces of having been conceived as the combination of front, back, and side bas-reliefs. And this continues to make itself felt almost until the final development of the tradition. Complete plastic freedom with us seems only to come at the end of a long period, when the art has attained a high degree of representational skill and when it is generally already decadent from the point of view of imaginative significance.*
>
> *Now the strange thing about these African sculptures is that they bear, as far as I can see, no trace of this process. Without ever attaining anything like representational accuracy they have complete freedom. The sculptors seem to have no difficulty in getting away from the two-dimensional plane.*

James M. Silberman


I WESTERN SUDAN
II GUINEA COAST
III CAMEROON GRASSLANDS
IV CONGO

MAJOR CULTURE AREAS


CULTURE AREAS
COUNTRIES
TRIBES
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WESTERN SUDAN
WESTERN SUDAN
MAURITANIA
MALI
NIGER
SENEGAL
GAMBIA
FULANI
DOGON
BAMBARA
BOBO
MOSSI
PORT GUINEA
MALINKE
GUINEA
UPPER VOLTA
FULANI
FULANI
NIGERIA
SENUFO
GHANA
SIERRA LEONE
IVORY COAST
TOGA
DAHOMEY
LIBERIA
GUINEA COAST
CAMEROON

CULTURE AREAS

The major art producing cultures of Subsaharan Africa are concentrated in the western region, divided by anthropologists into three culture areas—Western Sudan, Guinea Coast, and Congo. The culture area serves to show broad similarities in material traits, beliefs, and customs among clusters of societies, despite the presence of individual differences. The culture area is an abstraction, convenient for presenting ethnographic material. It should be noted that the area boundaries do not correspond with national boundaries, nor are the inhabitants of the area probably aware of the unity discerned by the student. Though boundaries are marked precisely on maps, actually the life style of one area shades into another. Border tribes such as the Baga, Senufo, and those of the Cameroon Grasslands must be placed somewhat arbitrarily in one area or another.

The brief descriptions of the three culture areas and the functions of the art objects are usually written in the present tense in the catalog. However, it should be understood that the way of life in many African societies has been greatly altered due to the impact of European civilization. This has resulted in industrialization, literacy, new concepts of the supernatural, and nationalism. The cultural picture as presented here generally pertains to the end of the 19th century. In that period many of the masks, figures, and other items were part of more fully integrated cultures.

Because some of the ritual and other items are no longer made or used in their old cultural context, their specific functions are not known; in other cases there are conflicting reports as to function.

WESTERN SUDAN CULTURE AREA

The Western Sudan culture area, a region of grass interspersed with trees, lies between the tropical rain forest of the Guinea Coast and the Sahara desert.

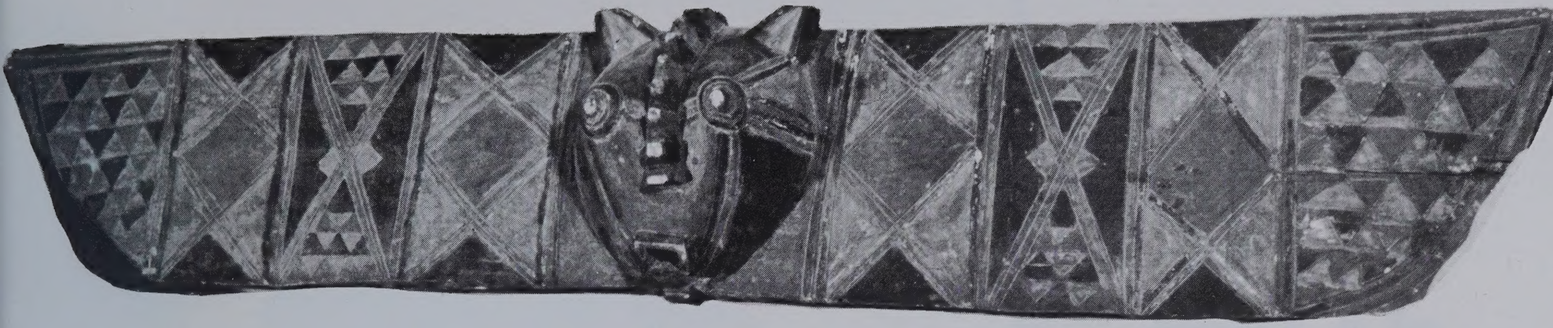
Subsistence activities of the area are diverse, some societies being mostly agricultural, some pastoral with herding of cattle, sheep and goats, while others combine farming and herding. In contrast to the tropical forest areas where root crops predominate, cereals such as maize, millets, and sorghum are the staple products. In many places plots of land are used for one to a few years being abandoned to regrowth when the soil becomes exhausted, then used later after fertility has been restored. An iron hoe is the main farming implement with this type of shifting cultivation. Some societies, such as the Hausa, Bambara, and Mandingo, have more complex cultivation with greater variety of crops yielding more surplus for subsistence and trade. Rituals associated with the clearing of new fields, planting, and harvesting are important.

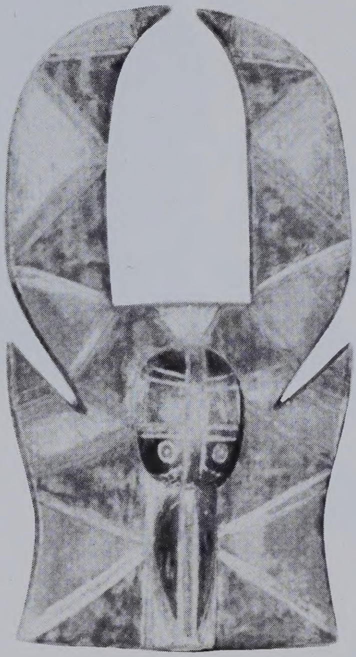
Highly skilled craft specialists in wood, metal, cloth, leather, basketry, etc. are organized into guilds that control production and distribution. Active trading of their products is conducted in markets of the towns and urban centers. Non-craft specialists such as singers, dancers, and learned men are also found.

Descent, or kin group affiliation, as in most of Africa, is reckoned on one side of the family only. In the Western Sudan descent is patrilineal, being traced through a line of males. Generally the rule of residence is that the wife leaves her natal home to join the compound or village of her husband, thus becoming a part of his extended family. Larger groupings of patrilineally related kinsmen—lineages and clans—regulate marriage, oversee the individual's education, propitiate spirits of deceased ancestors, and in other ways guide behavior and provide support.

Politically, the Sudan has two major types of organization. Those societies with less complex farming live in dispersed hamlets or villages localized about a core of patrilineal kin. Such tribes, usually found in the more remote parts of the Sudan, for example the interior of Guinea and Liberia, and northern territories of Ghana, Dahomey, and Nigeria, have no centrally organized government. Their villages are autonomous and have chiefs who are members of leading kin groups. More spectacular are the societies with strong centralized authority, social classes, and elaborate court life. In these kingdoms power is held by the king who with his councilors and nobles constitute an hereditary aristocracy.

The southern strip of the Sudan has been only slightly influenced by Islam, but in the central and northern areas it is the dominant religion of the ruling classes and most of the populations have been at least nominally Muslims for centuries. It appears that Islamic belief has been added to or blended with earlier Sudanic religions rather than totally replacing them. Belief in local spirits and nature deities, reverence of the ancestors, the practice of magic, and divination generally similar to the Guinea Coast and Congo area are evident. Ritual utilizing masks and figures are important in the non-Islamized or lightly-Islamized area.





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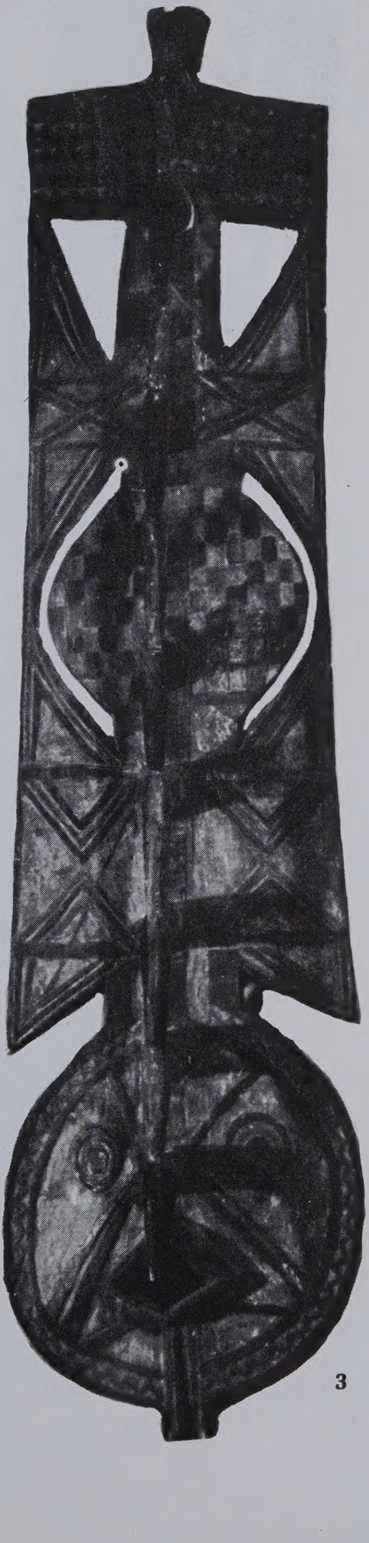


3

1 BUTTERFLY MASK. Bobo-Fing, Upper Volta. Wood, pigment, 61 in.

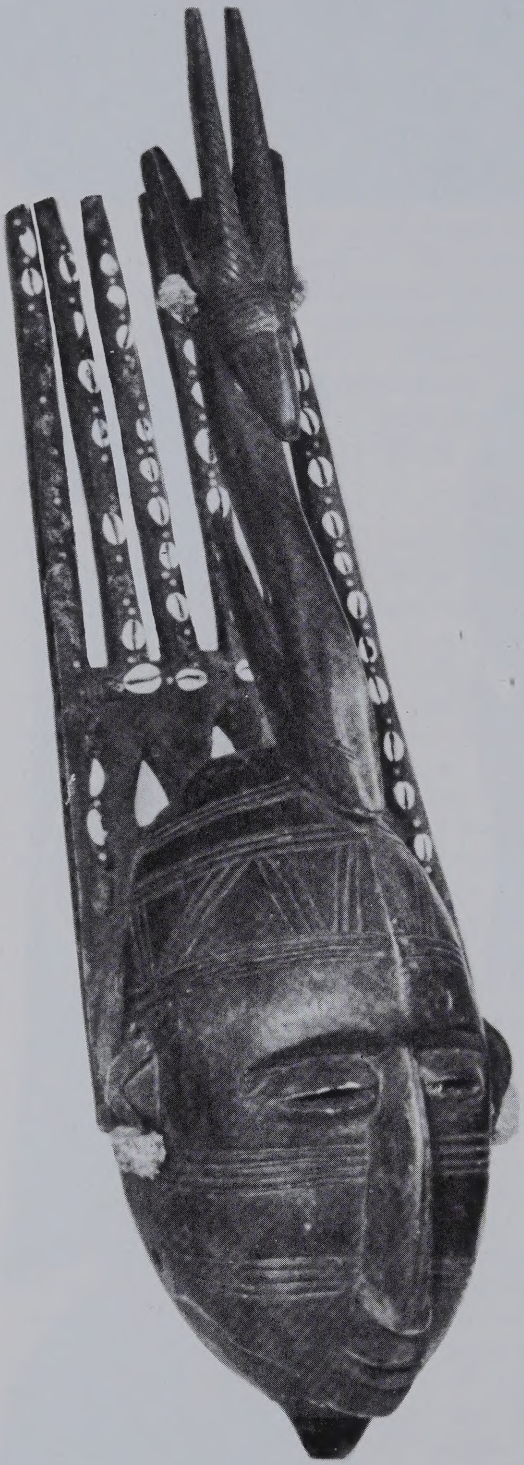
The mask, representing a butterfly, is worn in planting ceremonies to invoke the Do spirit guardians of the village. Should a dancer break such a mask, he has committed murder and must make proper atonement; the broken mask is buried as if it were a human.

2 HELMET MASK. Bobo, Upper Volta. Wood, pigment, 20 in.

This Do mask, depicting a bush cow, shows the geometric designs that are a striking feature of Bobo masks.

3 MASK. Bobo, Upper Volta. Wood, pigment, 55 in.

Some Do masks are used to rid the area of demons before a funeral or at the start of the agricultural season. Most commonly birds, butterflies, cows and other "bush spirits" are depicted.



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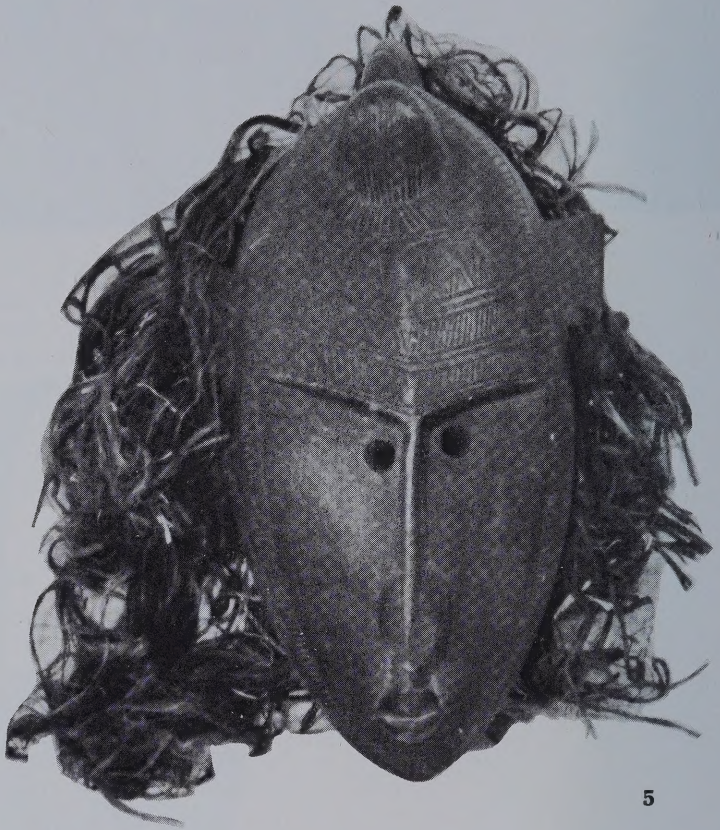
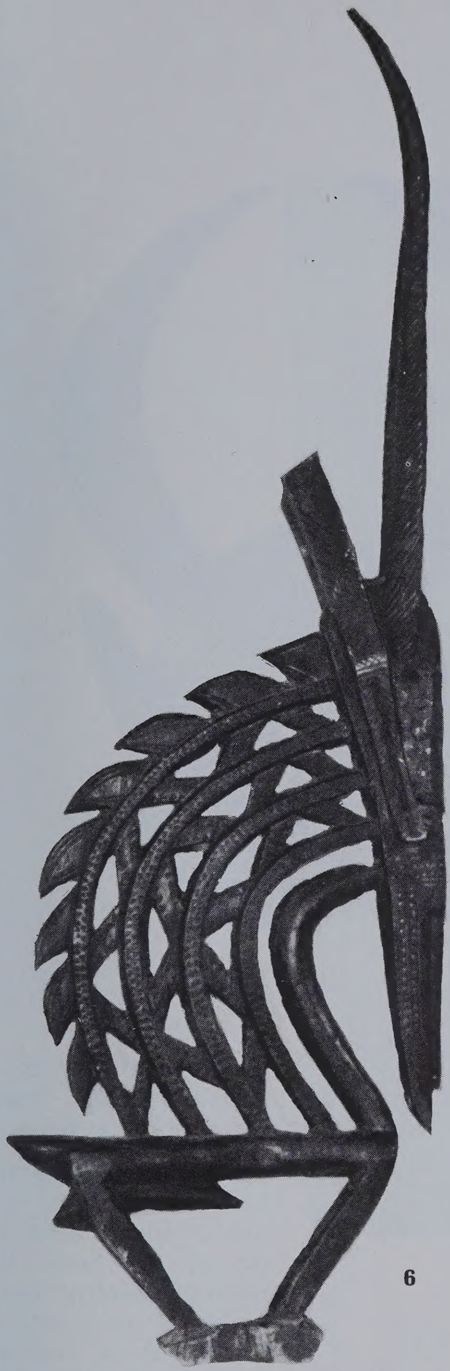


5

4 - 5 N'TOMO MASKS. Bambara, Mali. Wood, cowries, kise seeds, fiber, 33 in; wood, fiber, 17 in.

Uncircumsized boys are initiated into the N'tomo society which furnishes protection from evil, settles disputes, and engages in farming ceremonies.



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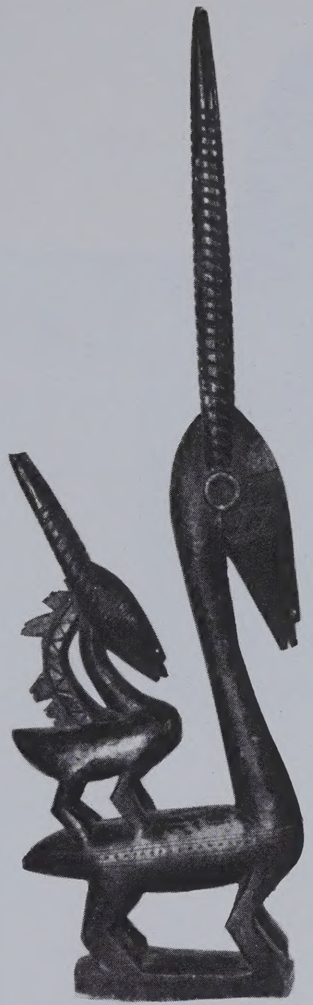

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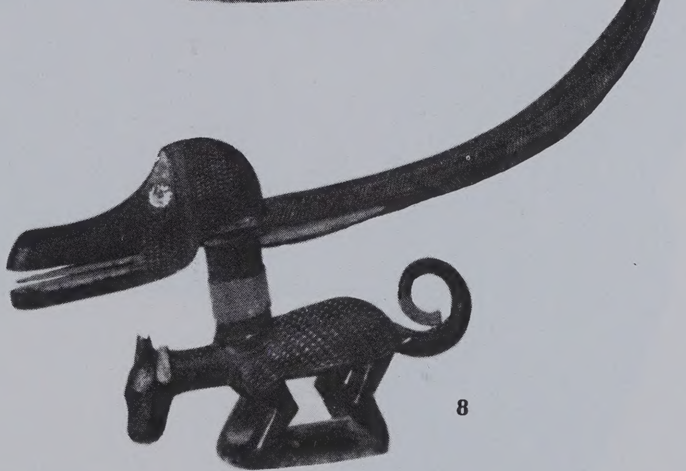
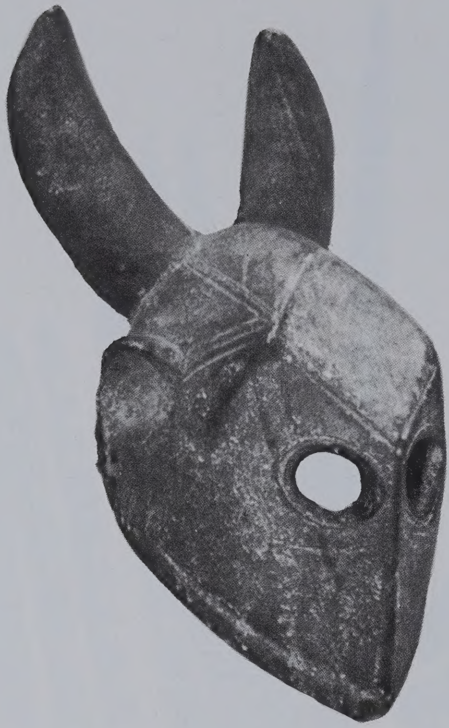


8

6 - 7 - 8 CHI WARA HEADPIECES. Bambara, Mali. Wood, 44 in.; wood, 30 in.; wood, metal, cloth, pigment, 27 in.

These headpieces, often highly stylized, represent the spirit Chi Wara who, in the form of an antelope, introduced agriculture. To insure a good crop young men imitate the leaping movements of the antelope in a dance at planting and harvest. The Chi Wara dance is performed by men in pairs representing the male and female antelopes. Elaborately carved filigree necks and curved horns characterize the male antelope; the female headdress is distinquished by the straight horns and young animal on its back. These headpieces are usually attached to a wickerwork cap.



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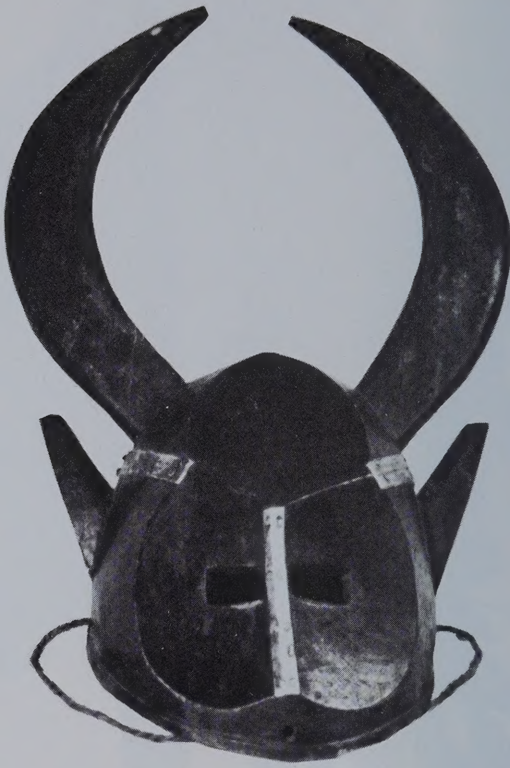

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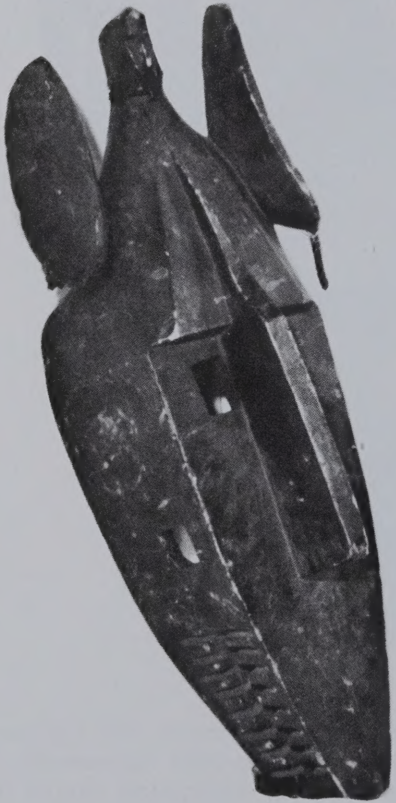


11

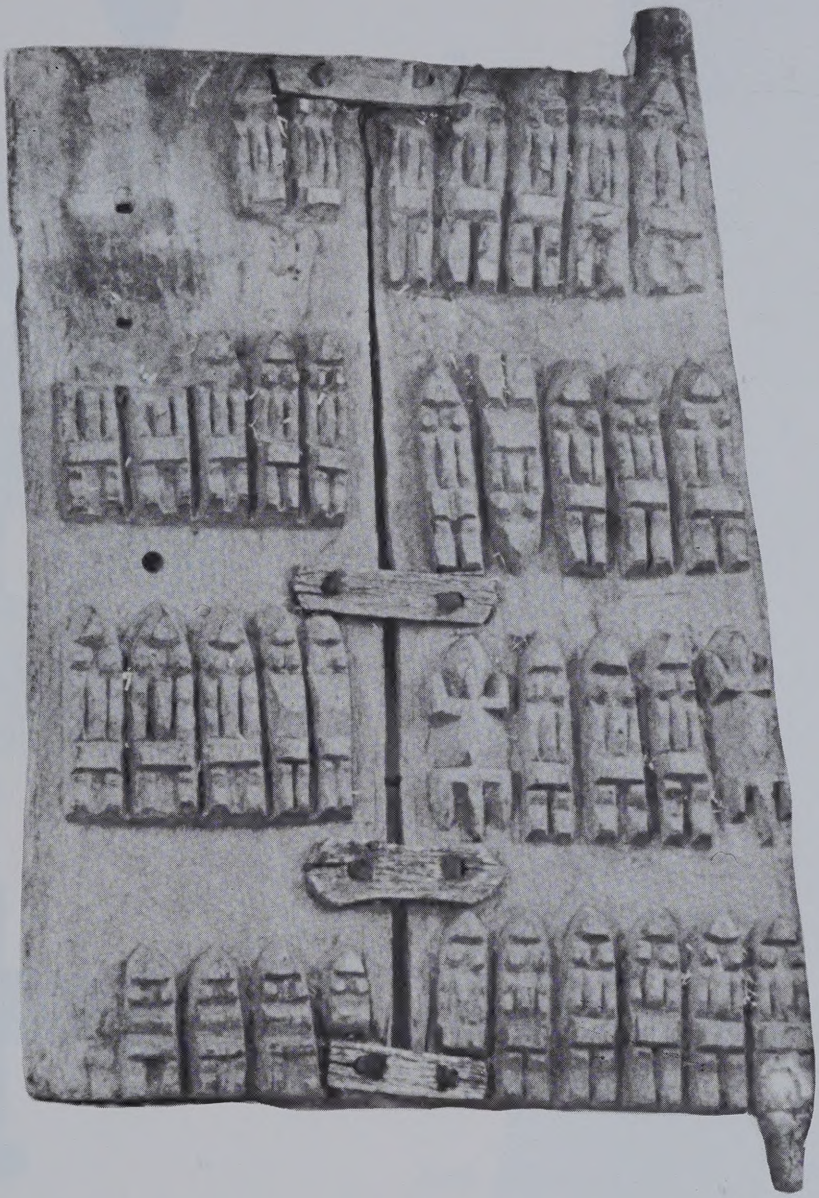
9 HELMET MASK. Bambara, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 21 in.

Instead of covering the face, some masks are like a helmet worn on top of the head, the wearer's identity being concealed by a robe of fiber or straw attached to the mask. Other helmet masks fit completely over the head.

10 HELMET MASK. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, metal, 21 in.

11 DUAL MASK. Malinke, Mali. Wood, 27 in.

This rare example of 19th century Malinke art, combining human and crocodile features, could be worn as a helmet or face mask as indicated by the two pairs of square-cut eyes.



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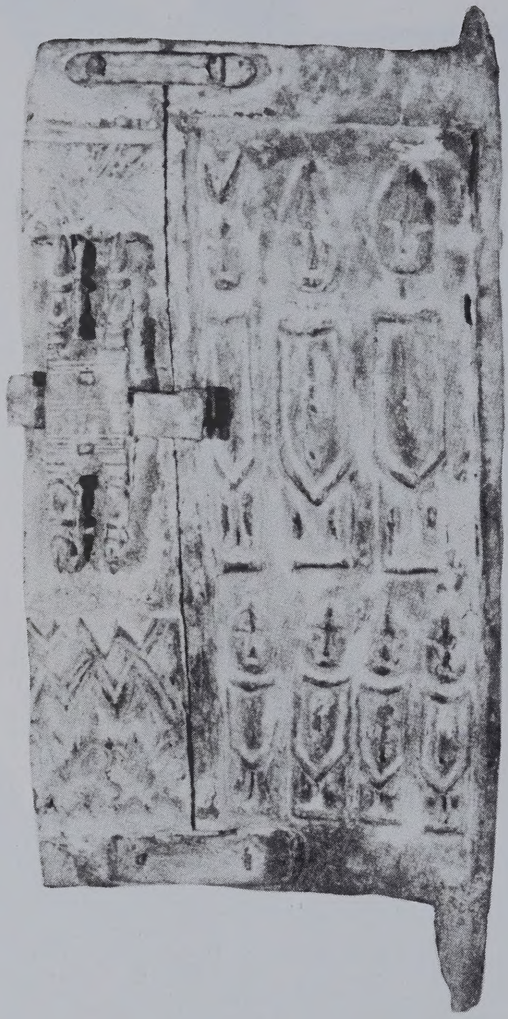
12 GRANARY DOOR. Dogon, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 29 in.

Among farming people the storing of grain takes on great significance. Granaries are often decorated (among the Dogon with clay breasts or crosses). The doors, too, are richly decorated, particularly those on the granaries of the high priest. Often, as in this case, rows of stylized human figures representing the eighty ancestors of mankind are depicted.



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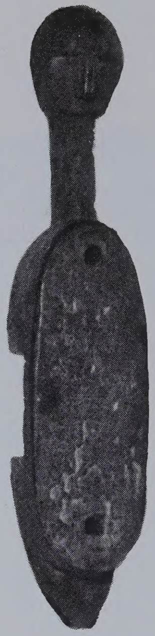

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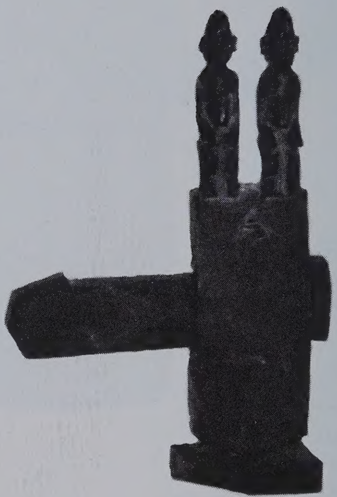

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13 GRANARY DOOR WITH LOCK. Dogon, Mali. Wood, metal, encrustation, 32 in.

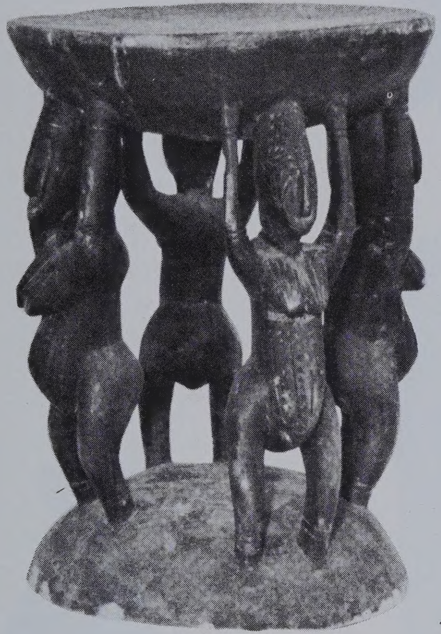
Encrustation on this door and many ritual objects is an accumulation of sacrificial material such as blood mixed with mud, meal, or millet beer.

14 DOOR LOCK. Bambara, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 16 in.

Locks for shrine and granary doors frequently are carved with ancestral heads or figures of humans and animals.

15 DOOR LOCK. Bobo, Upper Volta. Wood, metal, 12 in.

The slide-bar type of lock is found all over West Africa.



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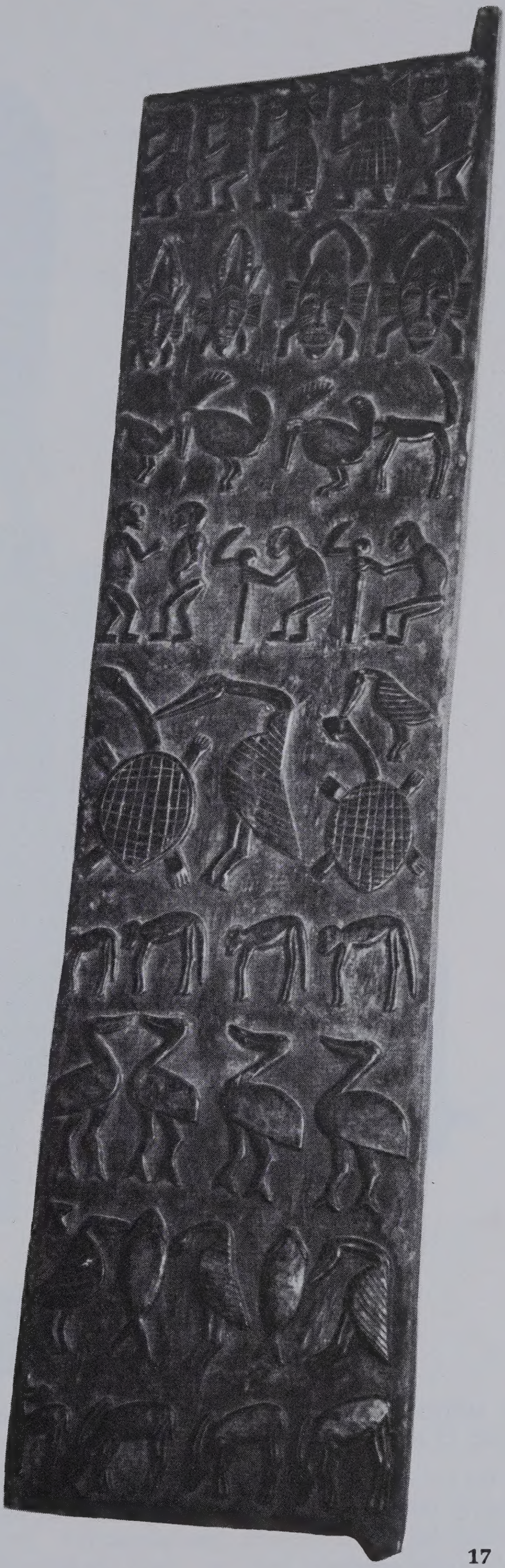

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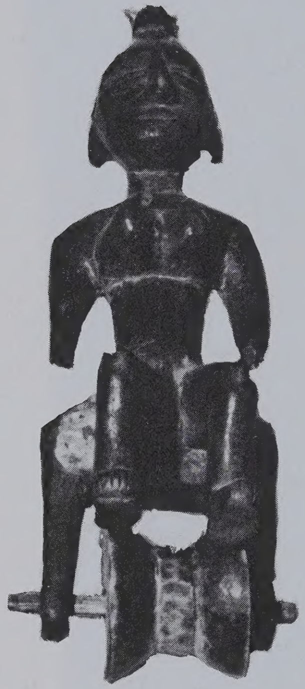
16 STOOL. Bambara, Mali. Wood, 18 in.

17 HOUSE DOOR PANEL. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 62 in.

Elaborately carved doors are used on houses of important people, as well as on shrines and granaries. This one is decorated with creatures significant in Senufo mythology and ritual — the tortoise, hornbill, and antelope.



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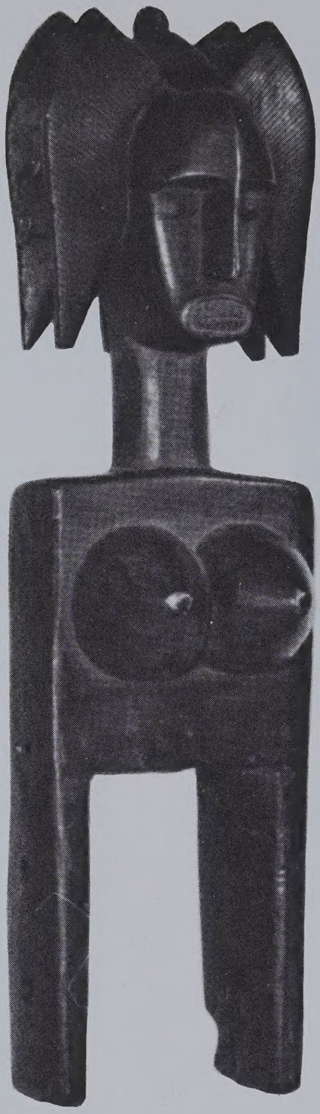

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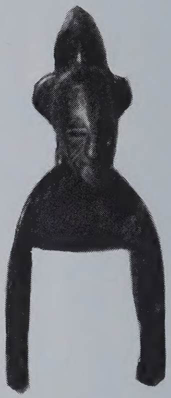

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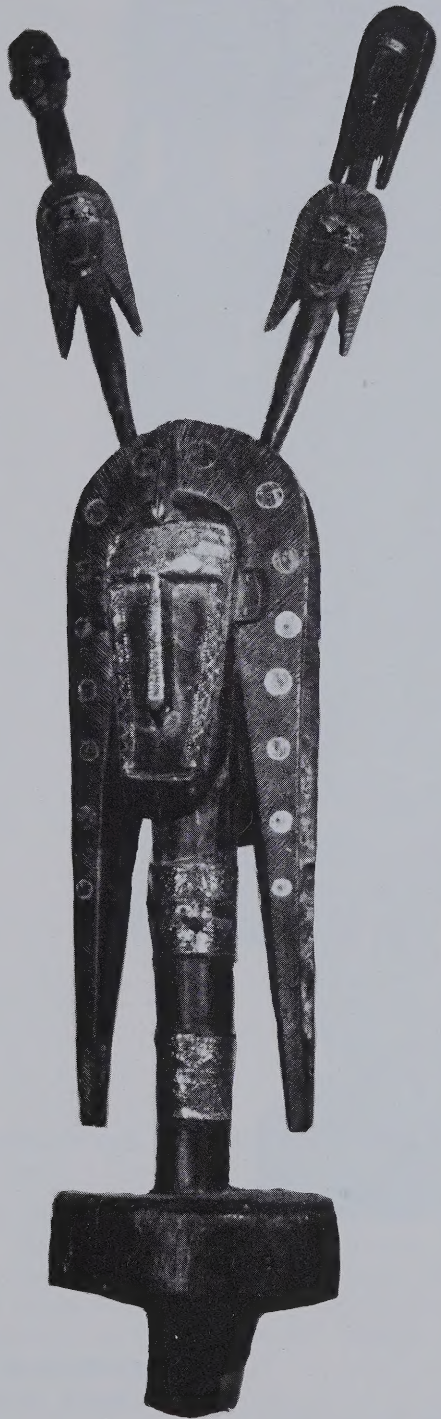
18 HEDDLE PULLEY. Bambara, Mali. Wood, metal, 11 in.

At the top of a horizontal loom is a carved figure holding the pulley from which two heddles, separating the warp threads, are suspended. Pulley holders generally have no ritual significance but are often in the form of human or animal heads; full figures are more rare. On the looms used by men narrow strips of fabric are woven which are then sewn together to make clothing.

19 RITUAL HEDDLE PULLEY HOLDER. Bambara, Mali. Wood, 26 in.

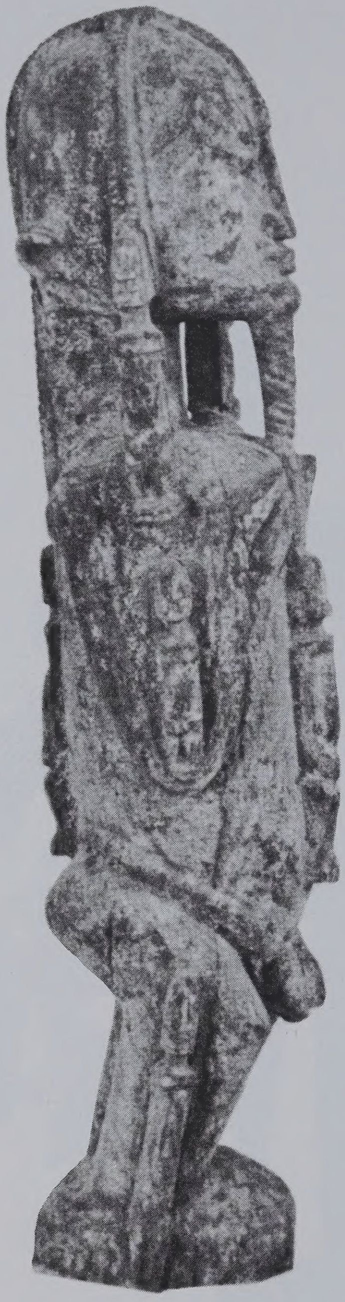
20 HEDDLE PULLEY HOLDER. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 7 in.



21 LARGE MARIONETTE. Bambara, Mali. Wood, pigment, metal, cloth, 40 in.

These large figures with smaller detachable heads are used in farming ceremonies and may also be carried at funeral rites.

21



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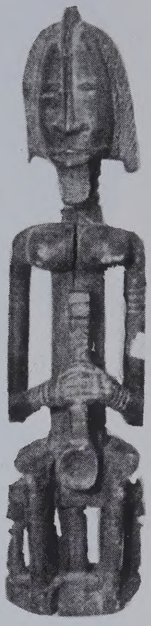

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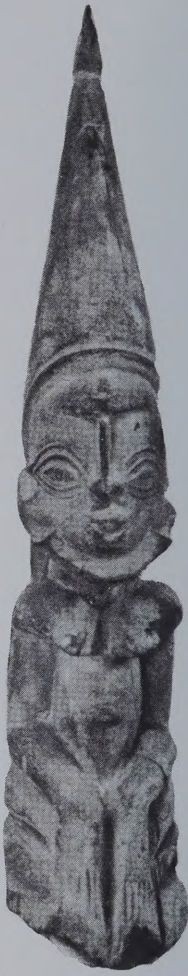


24

22 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Dogon, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 29 in.

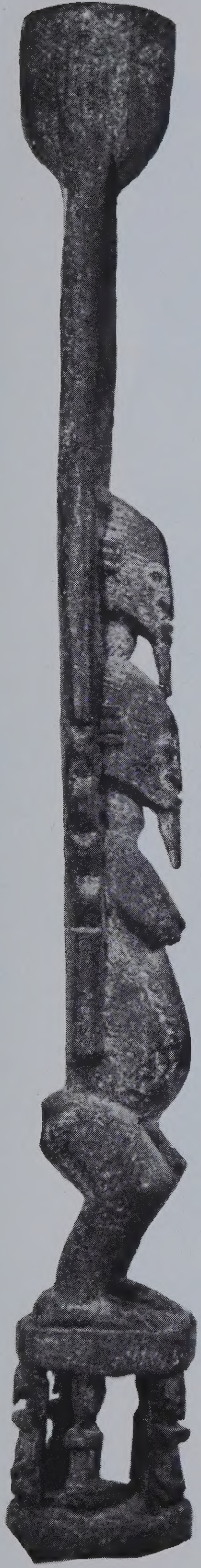
The figurines surrounding this 19th century male figure probably represent the eight founding ancestors who arranged the world before the coming of man.

23 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Dogon, Mali. Wood, 19 in.

Carved on the back of this seated female ancestor is an abstract child. The legs on the stool also represent ancestor figures. The piece is an example of the spindle type carving so characteristic of the Dogon and neighboring tribes.

24 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Dogon, Mali. Wood, 31 in.

The large cap atop this kneeling ancestor figure is an unusual feature. It is common for the hands to be portrayed downward. Among the Dogon an annual festival of the dead is held, at which time sacrifices are made to the ancestors and favors asked of them.



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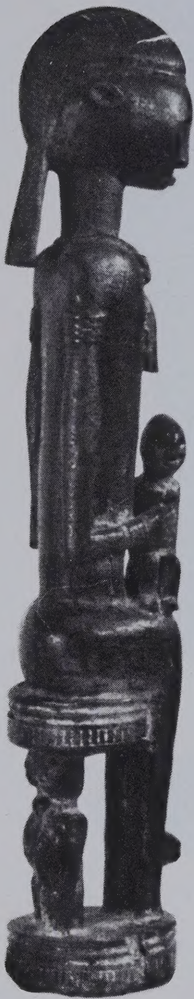


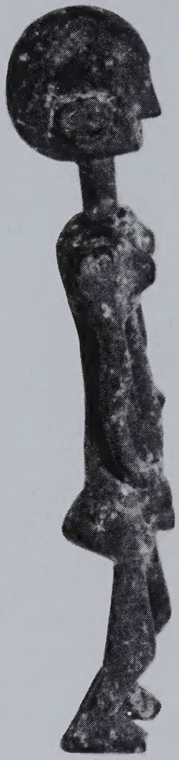
26

25 TELLEM-STYLE FIGURE. Dogon, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 51 in.

Elongated figures with arms upraised, perhaps in prayer for rain, are called by the Dogon, Tellem (small ancestors) who are their supposed predecessors. The figures are stored in caves, where they are protected from the insects that frequently ravage African art objects, and are used in farming ceremonies.

26 MATERNITY FIGURE. Dogon, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 29 in.

A mother and child are depicted in this rare, archaic example of a Senufo-related style.



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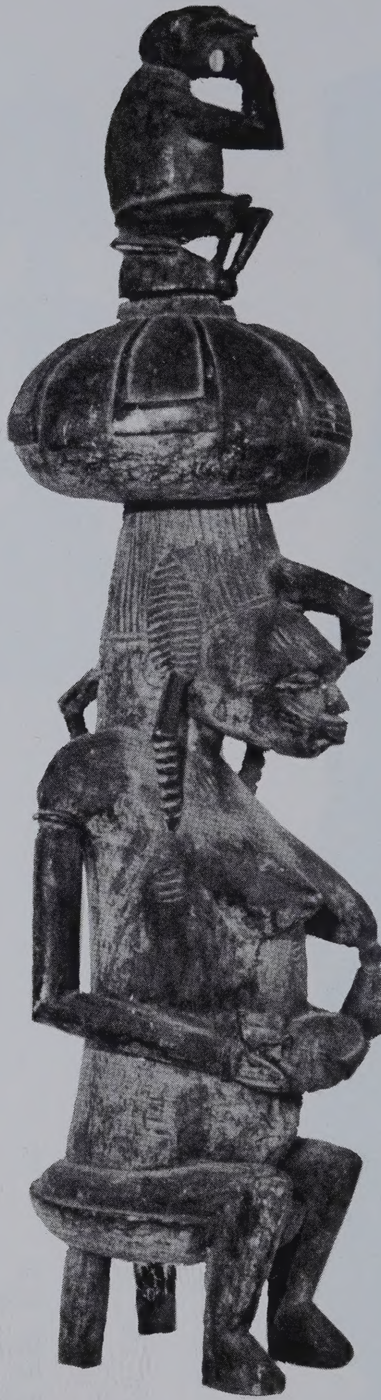


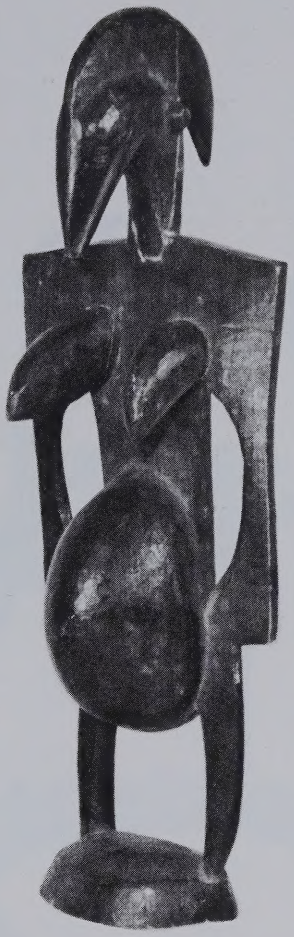
28

27 FETISH FIGURE. Bambara, Mali. Wood, encrustation, 19 in.

Originally this figure was covered with feathers and used as a ritual object.

28 MATERNITY FIGURE. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 43 in.

Figures like this, kept in shrines, are sacrificed to by women desiring a child.



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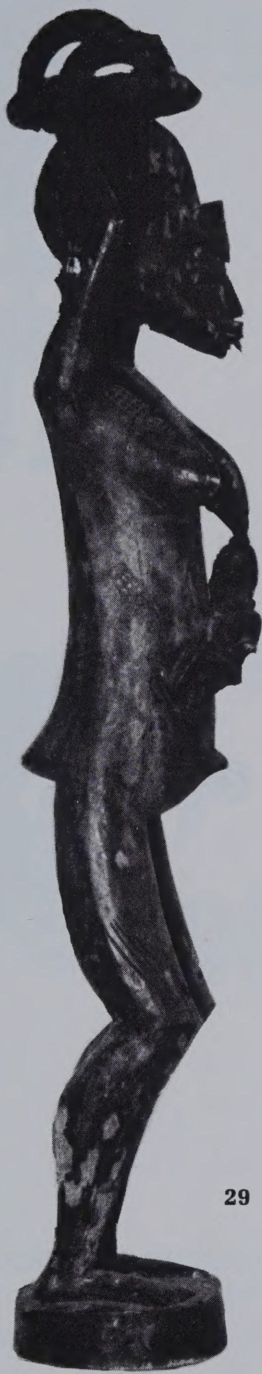


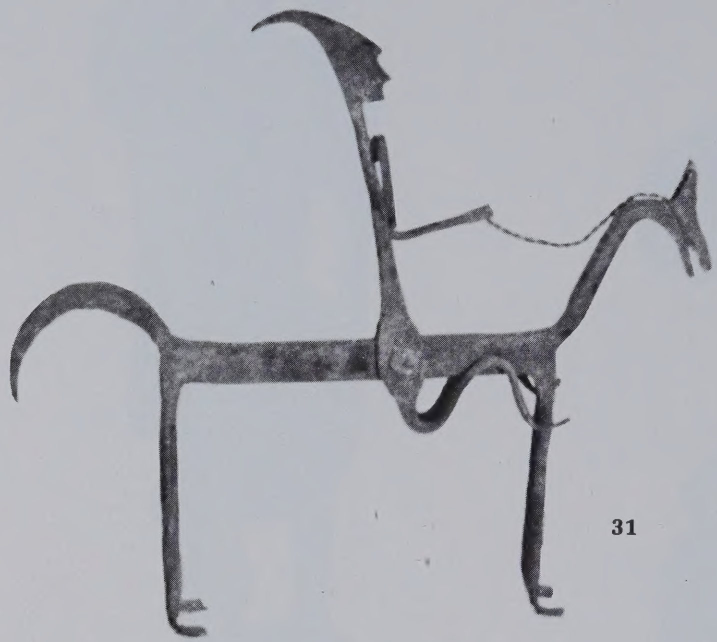
29

29 MATERNITY FIGURE. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 41 in.

Senufo maternity-fertility figures are more commonly depicted seated. The forward-thrusting, narrow lower face with small mouth, elevated hairdress, and horn-like feature projecting from the forehead show a traditional stylistic treatment of Senufo facial features.

30 HORNBILL FIGURE. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 28 in.

The porpianong, or hornbill, is thought by the Senufo to be one of the first living creatures and the first killed for food. These bird figures symbolizing the life force of creation are carried on the head or placed on the ground in ceremonies of the Lo society, the most important of the Senufo social-control associations.



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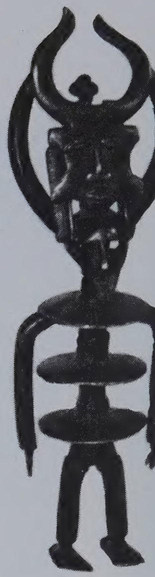

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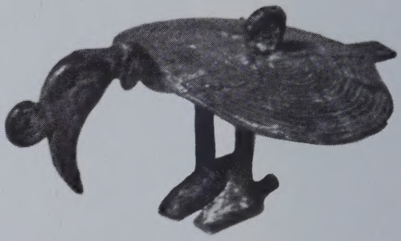


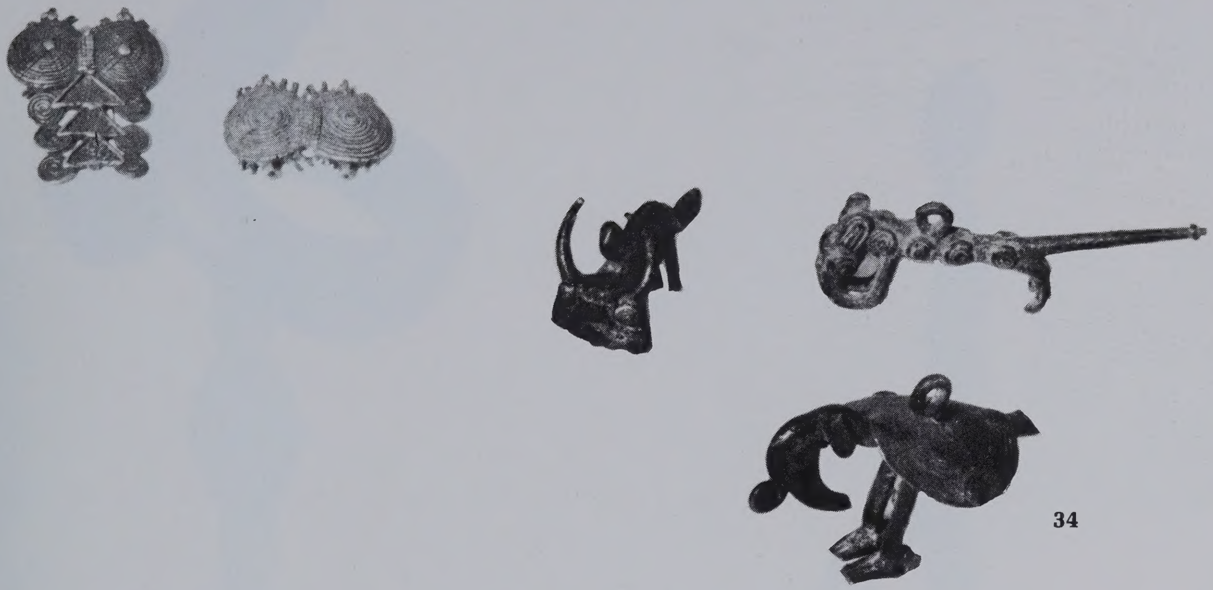
33

31 EQUESTRIAN FIGURE. Bambara, Mali. Iron, 12 in.

Figures similar to this, portraying the ancestors of the blacksmith caste among the Bambara, surmount ritual staffs. This recent piece may be a decorative object.

32 FIGURINE SURMOUNTED BY MASK. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Brass, 15 in.

33 BIRD FIGURE. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Brass, 4 in.



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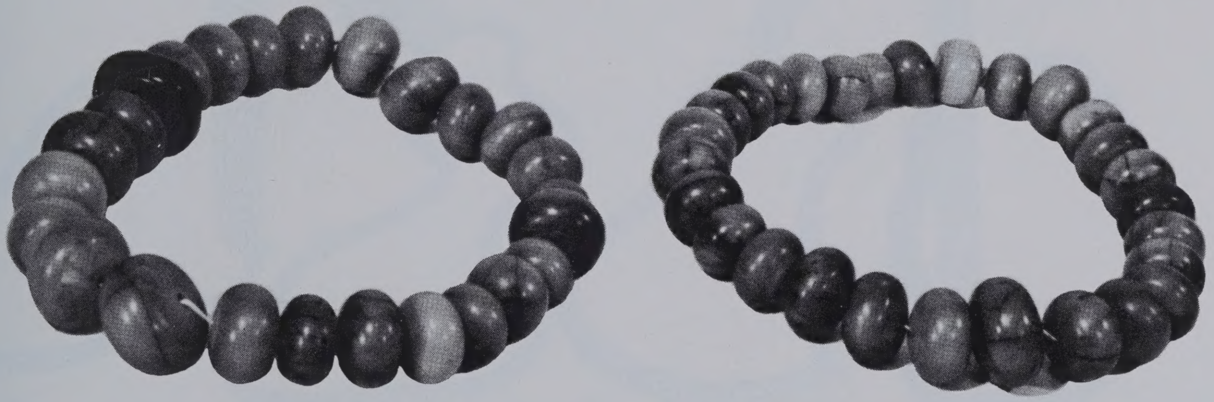


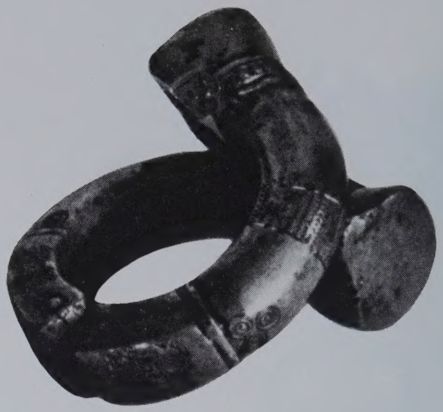
35

34 DRESS ORNAMENTS AND PENDANTS. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Brass, all less than 5 in. long.

The pendants represent a water buffalo, leopard, and hornbill.

35 NECKLACES. Fulani, Senegal to Cameroon. Amber, 28 in.

Amber in rough form was traded across the Mediterranean Sea and made into these heavy beads in Africa. They may be strung into necklaces or used singly as ear bobs or hair pendants.



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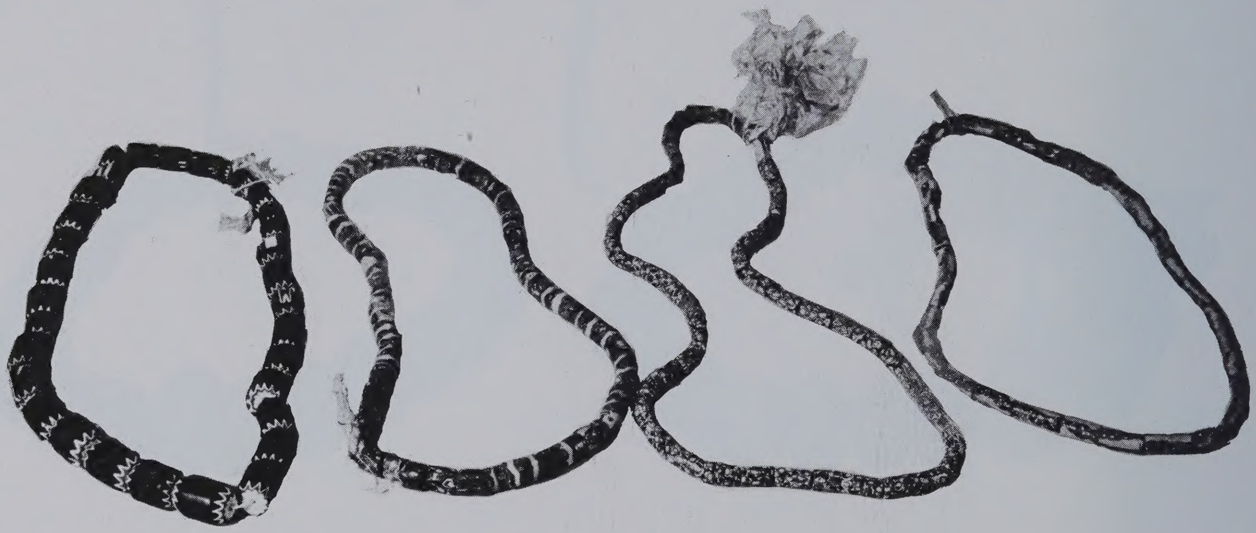


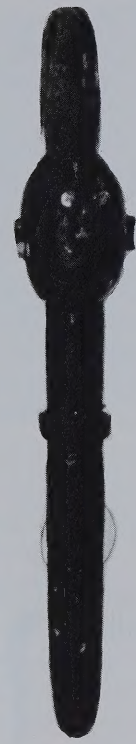
37

36 HINGED ANKLET. Fulani, Senegal to Cameroon. White metal, 4 in.

Gifts given by the groom to his bride may include old necklaces of glass beads, cowries, and heavy bracelets and anklets of brass or silver.

37 NECKLACES. Nigeria. Glass, 30 in.

Venetian glass beads were a popular trade item. They came from Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries across major caravan routes of the Sahara into the Sudan.



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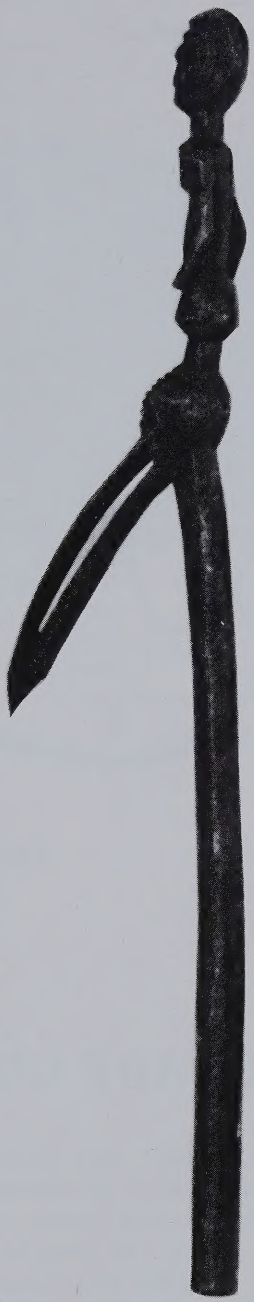
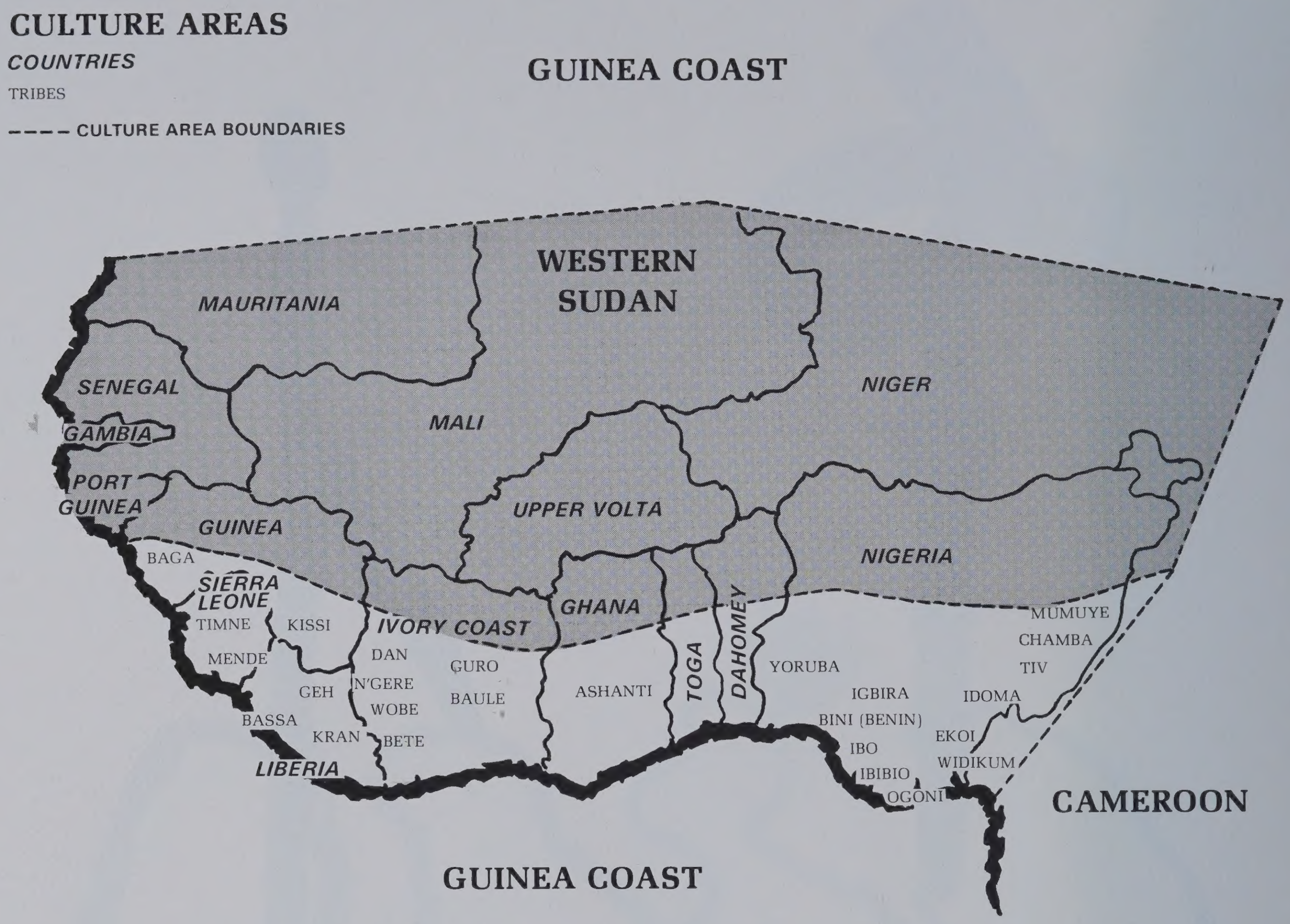


39

38 **SCEPTER WITH HEAD AND CREST. Mossi, Upper Volta. Wood, pigment, button, 19 in.**

39 **SCEPTER WITH BIRD BILL AND MALE FIGURE. Bobo, Upper Volta. Wood, 26 in.**


CULTURE AREAS
COUNTRIES
TRIBES
---- CULTURE AREA BOUNDARIES
GUINEA COAST
WESTERN SUDAN
MAURITANIA
SENEGAL
GAMBIA
PORT GUINEA
GUINEA
MALI
NIGER
UPPER VOLTA
NIGERIA
BAGA
SIERRA LEONE
TIMNE
KISSI
MENDE
GEH
BASSA
KRAN
LIBERIA
IVORY COAST
DAN
N'GERE
WOBE
BETE
GURO
BAULE
GHANA
ASHANTI
TOGA
DAHOMEY
YORUBA
IGBIRA
BINI (BENIN)
IBO
IBIBIO
OGONI
MUMUYE
CHAMBA
TIV
IDOMA
EKOI
WIDIKUM
CAMEROON
GUINEA COAST

GUINEA COAST CULTURE AREA

The Guinea Coast culture area runs along the West African littoral from Sierra Leone eastward to Cameroon and north into the interior about 250 miles. The area is mostly tropical rainforest merging into savanna on the north and interrupted by grasslands in Dahomey and Togo.

The economy is based on shifting hoe cultivation of root crops, such as yams, and tree crops, especially bananas, oil and raffia palms, and kola nuts. In some areas rice is important. Pastoralism is absent though fowl, pigs, goats and, in a few areas, some cattle are raised. High population density and economic surplus are associated with complex institutions in this area.

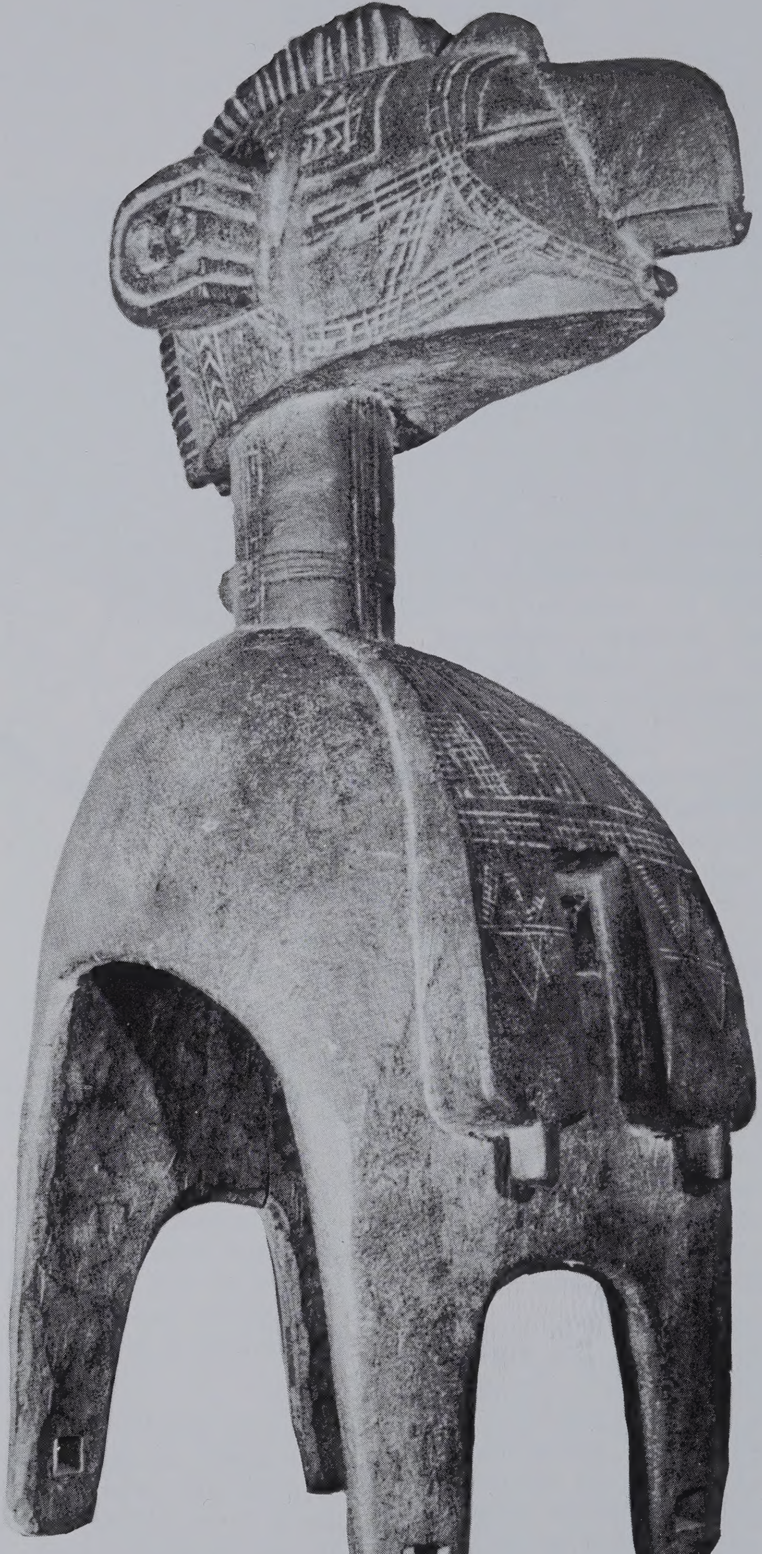
As in the Sudan, specialization of labor, craft guilds, and markets are present, being especially developed in the central portion from Ghana to western Nigeria.

Descent is usually through the mother or the father with patrilineal descent predominating and matrilineality appearing sporadically. Residence after marriage is generally in the compound of the husband's extended family. Plural marriage, as in most of Africa, is sanctioned. However, the number of wives a man has is determined primarily by his wealth and social status. Bride wealth, goods given by a groom to his bride's family, is necessary to validate a marriage.

Age-group organization is present and secret societies are important in maintaining social control, transmitting traditional knowledge, and conducting rituals. Secret societies, such as the Poro and Ekpo, are especially prominent in those cultures that lack strong central political authority.

As in the Western Sudan, some Guinea Coast societies are organized as kingdoms. Ashanti, Dahomey, Yoruba, and Benin of the central populous region are well known states having hierarchical organization, a divine ruler, elaborate court etiquette and art, and mechanisms for conquest. However, decentralized political groupings, such as the Mende, Ibo, Ibibio, and Tiv, based on ties of community and kinship are more common.

Religions of the Guinea Coast peoples include several categories of supernaturals. Great gods, often headed by a creator, control the forces of nature—sea, earth, sky, thunder; lesser and more localized beings are associated with rivers, forests, fertility, twins, and abnormal individuals. In daily life the individual and kin group are more often concerned with deceased ancestors than with the hierarchy of deities. Ancestors continue to influence directly the activities of their descendants and some ancestral spirits may be elevated to the realm of gods, their power and worship expanding over a wide area. Supernatural beings are associated with cults, guilds, age-groups, and secret societies. A widespread aspect of religion is divination in which objects are ritually manipulated for the purpose of acquiring information about the past, present, and future. Religious rituals range from private propitiation of ancestral or personal spirits, on behalf of the individual or kin group, to elaborate public ceremonies. These rituals involve priesthoods and include dramatic performances with masked and costumed devotees. The performers represent or embody the power of gods and spirits.



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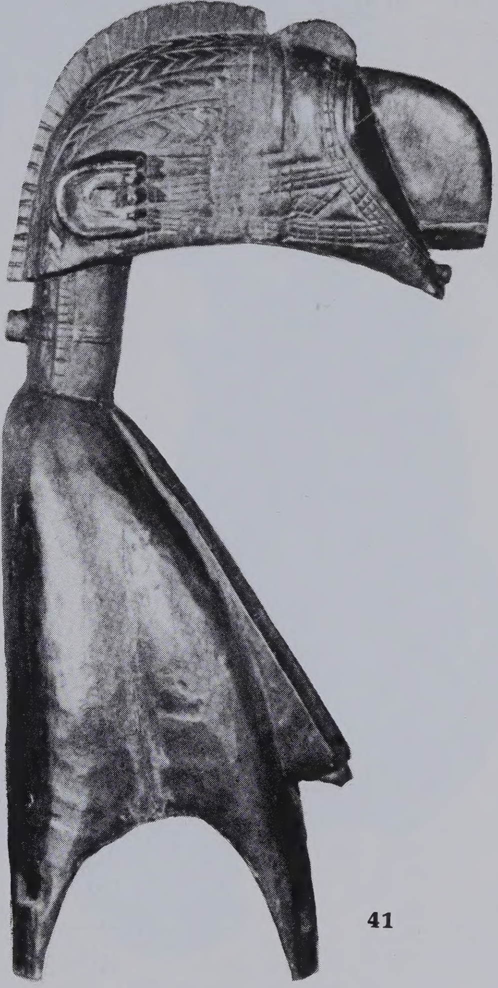
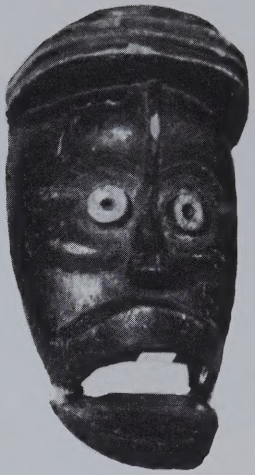


41

40 NIMBA MASK. Baga, Guinea. Wood, encrustation, tacks, 50 in.

After the rice harvest, the Simo society holds ritual dances in which these huge masks representing Nimba, the increase goddess, are worn. They rest on the shoulders of the dancer who is hidden by a skirt of grass attached to the mask's base. He sees out through slits in the breasts of the figure.

41 NIMBA MASK. Baga, Guinea. Wood, 17 in.



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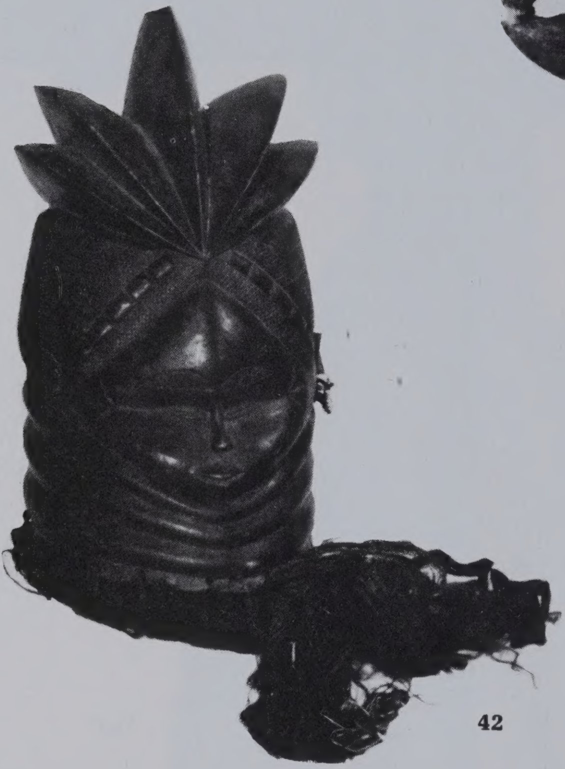

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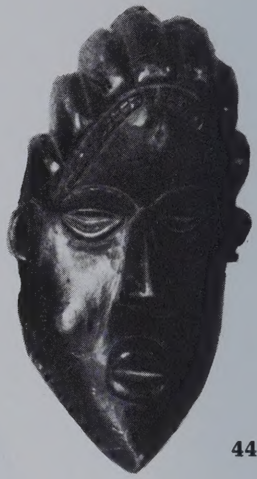


44

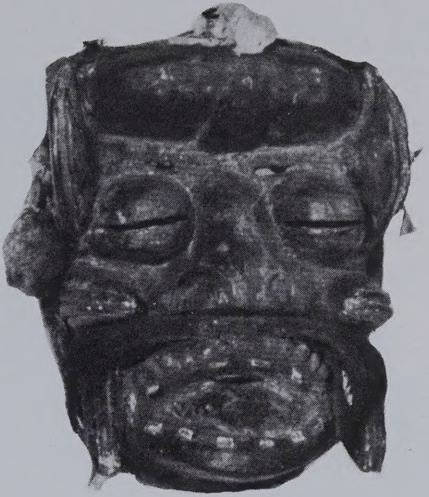
42 BUNDU HELMET MASK. Mende, Sierra Leone. Wood, fiber, beads, 15 in.

This mask is used by the Sande (or Bundu) society, which educates girls. At the end of the instruction period a festival is held during which the Bundu devil, protector of the society, appears in the form of these masks. The crest on the head is a hairdo; the rolls of fat on the neck signify beauty. Sande is the female counterpart to the men's Poro society.

43 PORO MASK WITH ARTICULATED JAW. Geh, Liberia. Wood, pigment, bone, 10 in.

The Poro society is so generalized in its functions that it governs almost every aspect of communal life. It is found among many tribes in West Africa, most notably those which lack strong centralized governments. There is no single style to Poro society masks — they vary greatly.

44 PORO MASK. Bassa, Liberia. Wood, 9 in.



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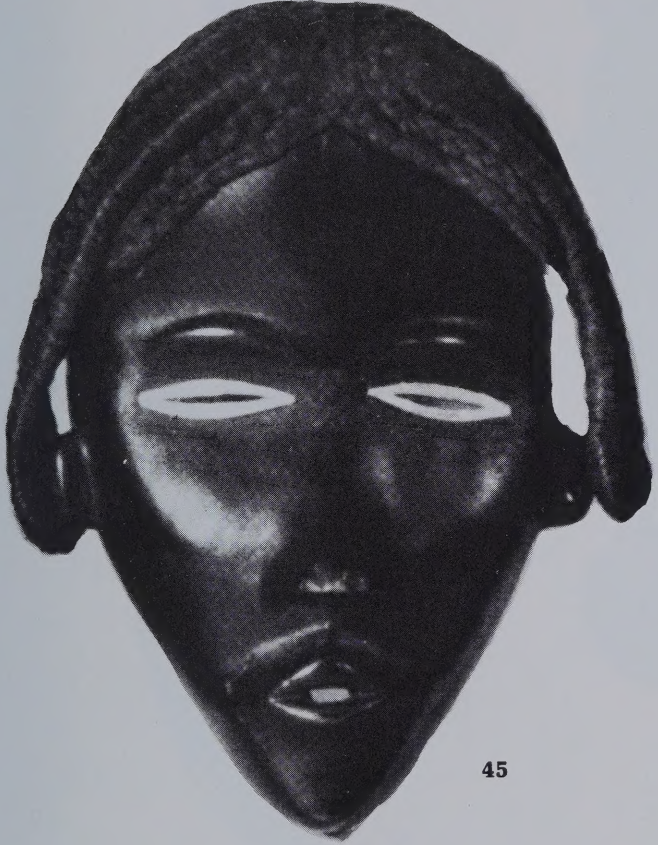

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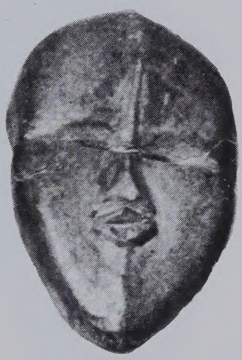


47

46 PORO MASK. Ngere, Ivory Coast. Wood, hair, metal, cloth, 11 in.

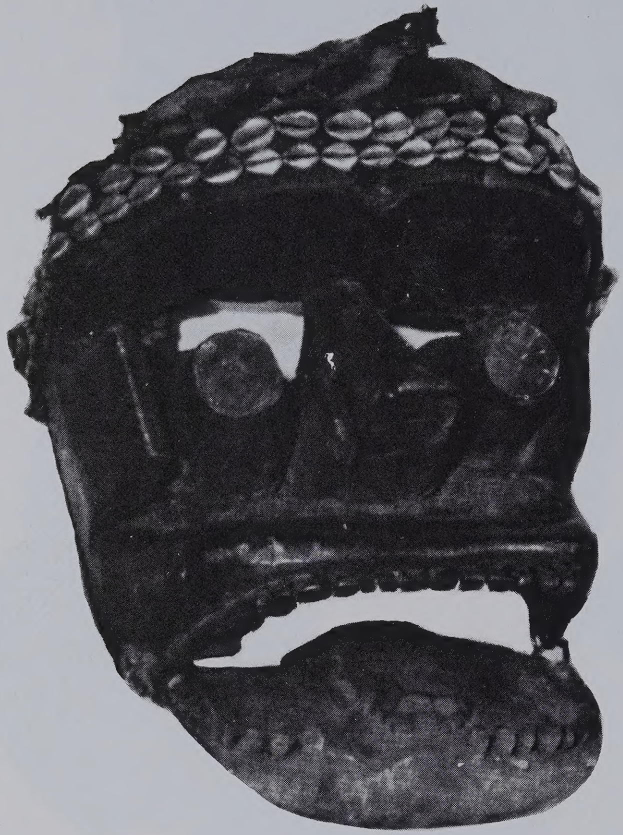
The mask represents a bush spirit. The typical bulges on the cheeks are wart hog tusks and the ears symbolize wings. These half human, half animal masks are no longer produced.

45 PORO MASK. Dan, Ivory Coast. Wood, fiber, metal, 8 in.

The narrow slit eyes indicate this mask is female. The sensitive realism of Dan carving contrasts sharply with the style of the related Ngere, yet the same artists are known to carve in both these styles.

47 PASSPORT MASK. Dan, Ivory Coast. Stone, 5 in.

A passport mask is worn to show membership in various men's societies. Also called ma masks (copies of larger, sacred masks) they are treated with great respect and considered guardians against illness.



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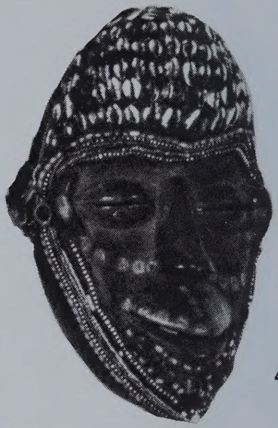
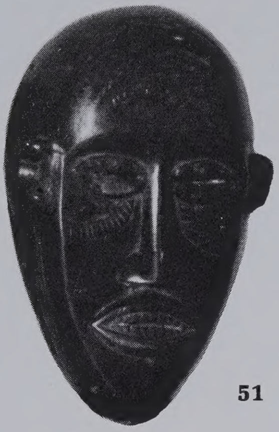


49

48 PORO MASK WITH ARTICULATED JAW. **Bete or Kran, Ivory Coast. Wood, metal, cowries, cloth, fur, 13 in.**

This mask with massive hemispherical brow, tubular eyes, and protruding cheeks is related to the Dan-Ngere style. It represents a forest spirit and is associated with the initiation rites of the Poro secret society.

49 PORO MASK. **Wobe, Ivory Coast. Wood, cowries, beads, kise seeds, metal, 12 in.**



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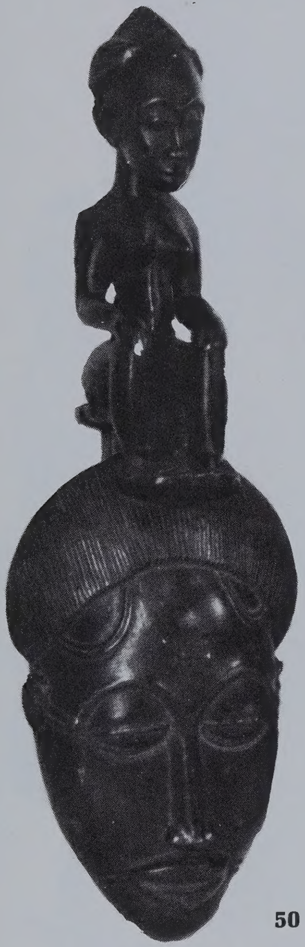

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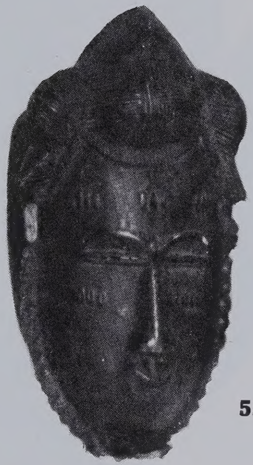


52

50 PORTRAIT MASK. Baule, Ivory Coast. Wood, 21 in.

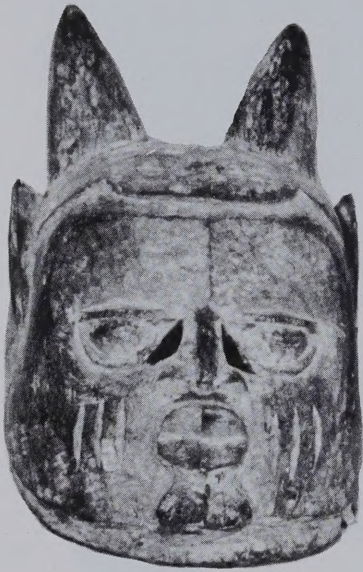
This black polished mask shows a characteristic striated hair style, slit coffee-bean shaped eyes, and a delicate nose and mouth. Clan markings are on the forehead and temples. These masks, used in societies that have socio-political functions, are often surmounted by ancestor figures or birds.

51 PORTRAIT MASK. Baule, Ivory Coast. Wood, 8 in.

Baule masks closely resemble Guro types. The mask is intended to represent an ancestral spirit. Some masks may be portraits of actual persons.

52 PORTRAIT MASK. Guro, Ivory Coast. Wood, pigment, 10 in.

Portrait masks depicting ancestors are used for magical practices and at the funerals of secret society members. The hair style is typical of Guro masks.



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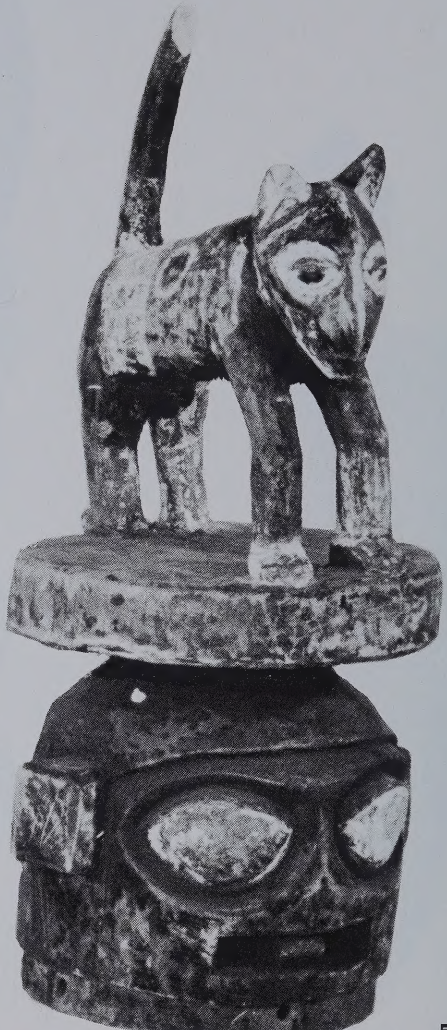


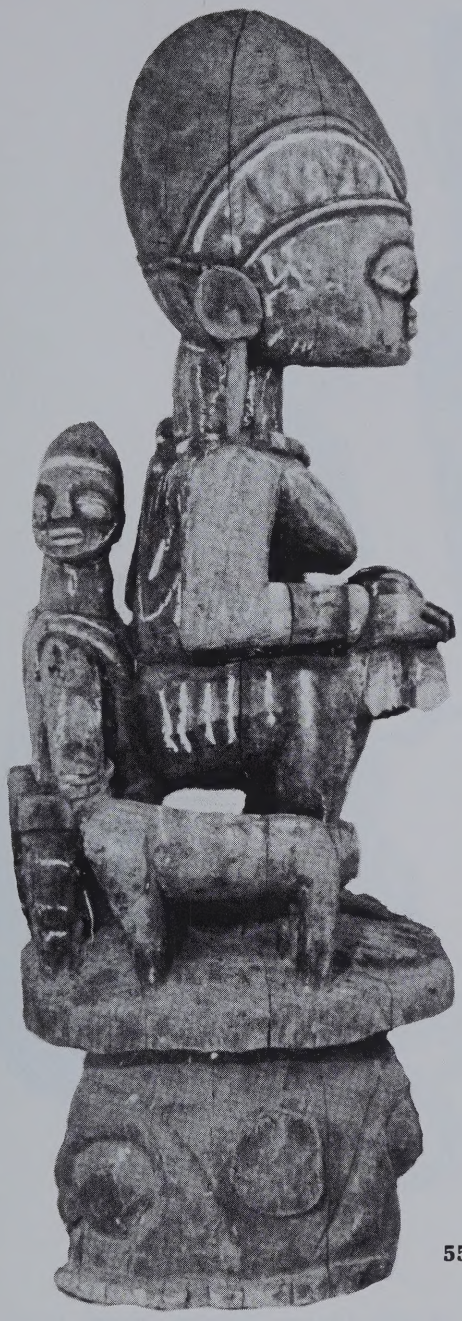
54

53 EGUNGUN HELMET MASK. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, 11 in.

Certain Egungun cult masks are carved with the features of hares and are reportedly used to control witches who are responsible for the deaths of small children. Egungun is primarily an ancestor cult whose members dance at funerals.

54 EPA HELMET MASK. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 31 in.

The three masks shown here are used by the Epa cult to ensure the land's fertility and the general welfare of man. The helmet portion has two faces and the varied superstructures offer some of the best examples of Yoruba sculptural creativity. These masks, called agura epa, can be very large and require strength to use properly while dancing. Pictured here is the leopard known variously as "lord of the bush" and "lord of the farms."



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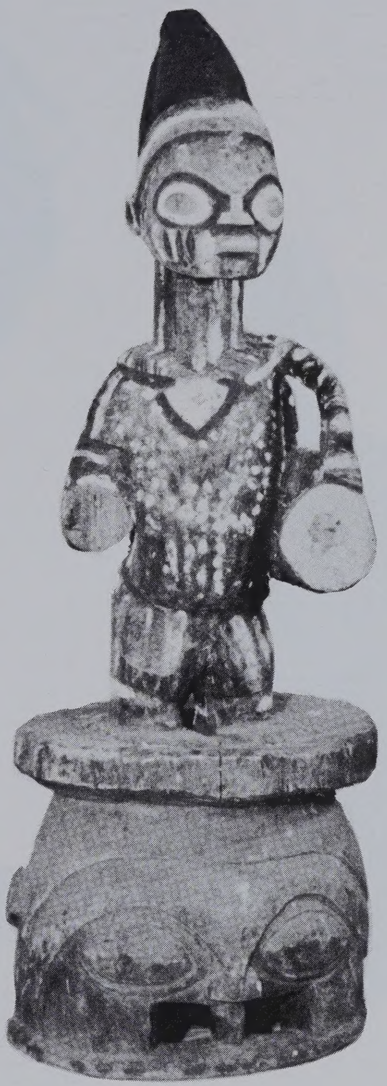

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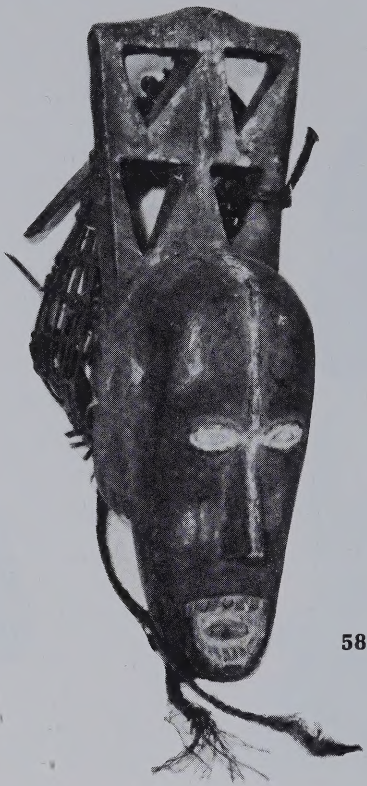
55 EPA HELMET MASK. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 39 in.

The maternity figure with retainers (animals and children) is in the earliest classical style and dates from the 19th century.

56 EPA HELMET MASK. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 33 in.

This mask with a standing drummer is a late 19th or early 20th century piece.



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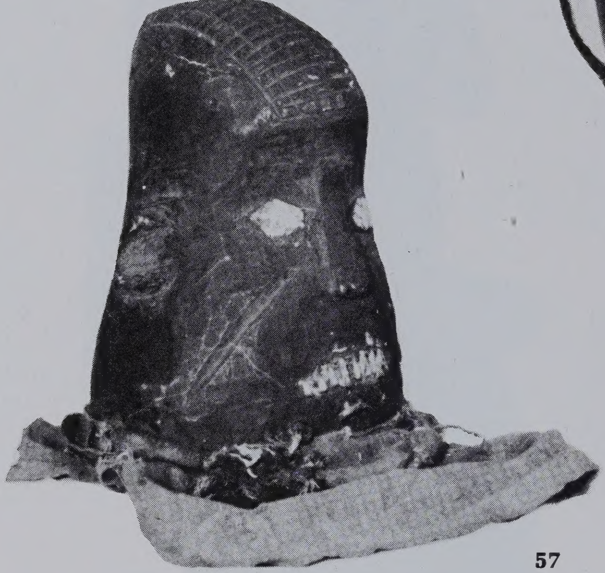

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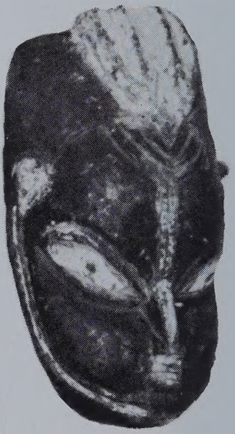


59

58 MASK. Idoma, Nigeria, Wood, cane, pigment, 17 in.

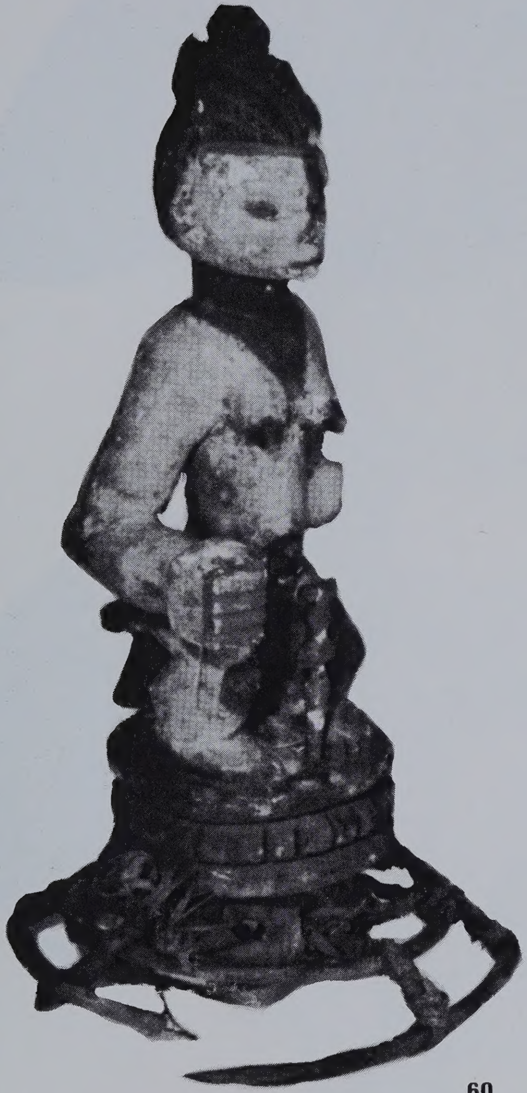
Art of the Idoma shows considerable influence from their Ibo neighbors to the south. The features of this crested mask with wickerwork headpiece illustrate the relationship.

57 HELMET MASK. Igbira, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, cloth, 15 in.

Igbira ceremonies often include masks made by several neighboring tribes. This unusual piece has cheek slash marks typical of many Nigerian tribes.

59 MASK. Bini, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 11 in.

Bini tribal art has always differed from Benin court art. This mask was used for cult dances.



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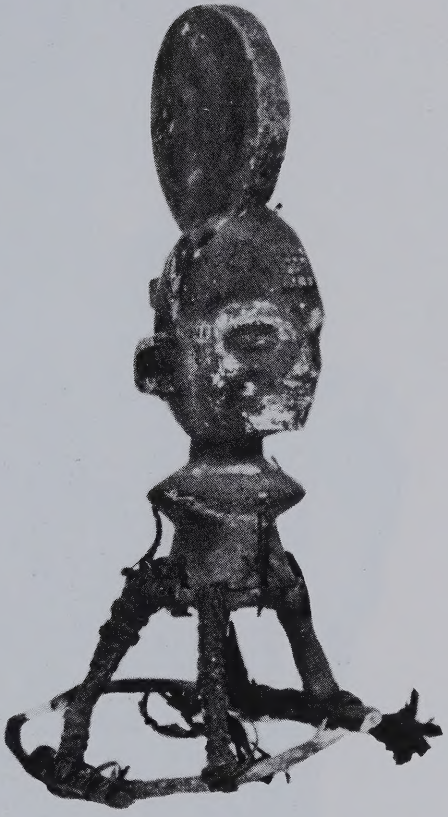
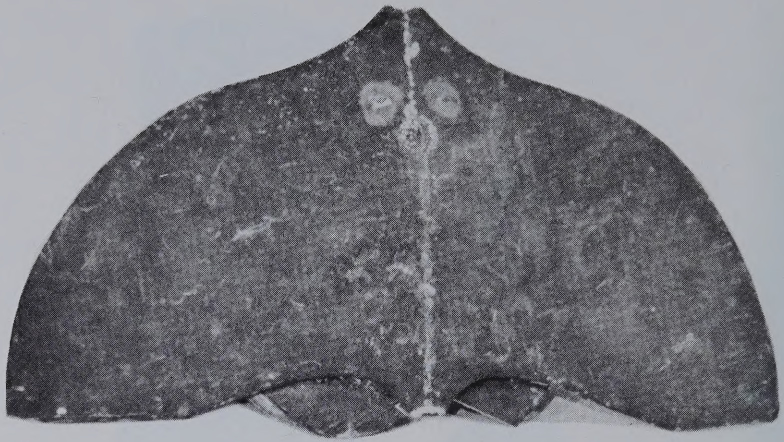


61

60 CEREMONIAL HEADPIECE. Idoma, Nigeria. Wood, cane, pigment, 17 in.

The seated figure of a woman is attached to a wickerwork frame and worn as a headpiece. Probably the figure held a ritual object in her hands.

61 DANCE HEADPIECE. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, fiber, cane, pigment, 21 in.



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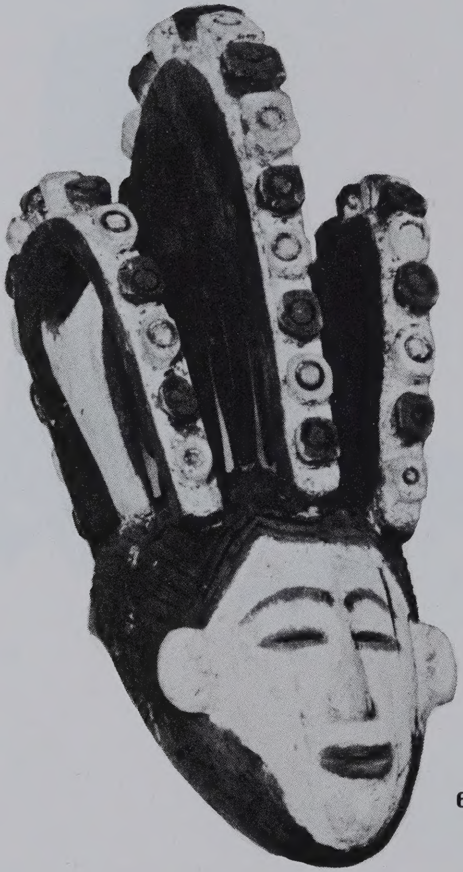

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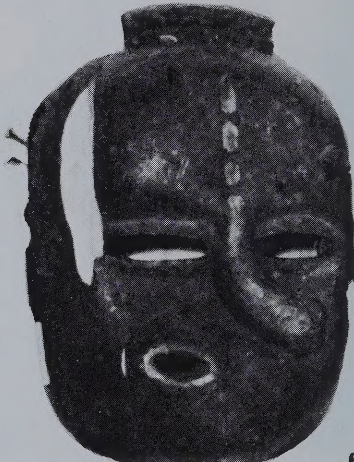


64

62 MMWO HELMET MASK. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 22 in.

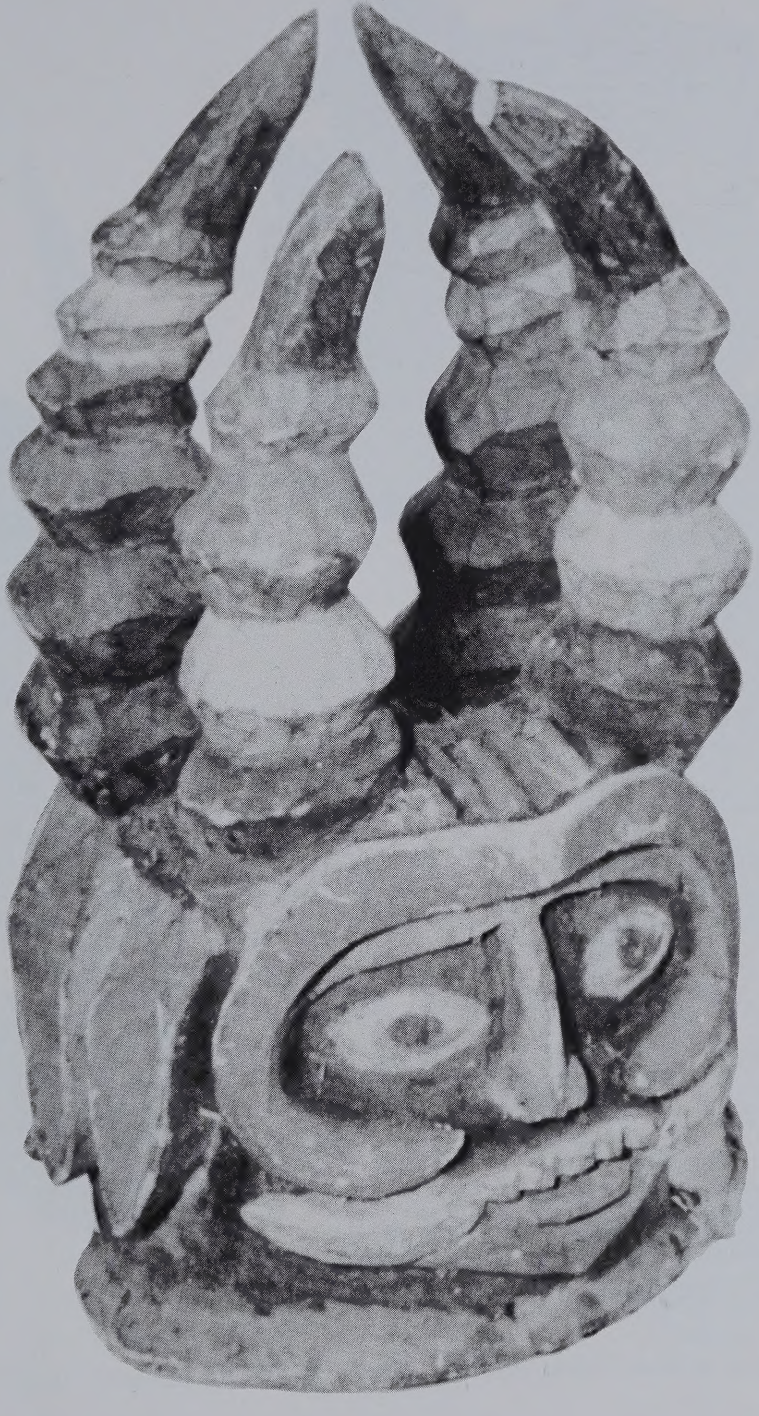
White-faced masks representing the spirit of a beautiful woman, Agbogho Mmwo, are worn by men at funerals and sometimes in entertainments. The masks, with high rounded forehead, delicate pointed nose, and often a triple crest, are worn with an appliquéd costume. There are male counterparts to this female spirit mask.

63 CEREMONIAL HEADPIECE. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 27 in.

This rare headpiece in the form of a skate illustrates the great diversity of Ibo styles.

64 TWIST-FACE MASK. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, 12 in.

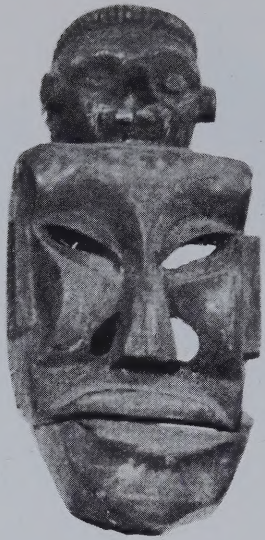
Masks with crooked features are also found in cultures outside Africa. The twisted nose and mouth may represent facial paralysis or yaws (in which the nose is eaten away).



65

65 HELMET MASK. Northern Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 22 in.

Communal hunts in a number of West African farming societies were preceded by masked dances to insure success in the venture.



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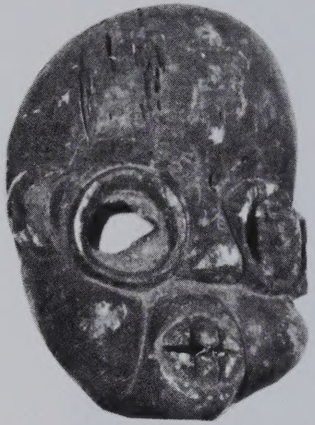

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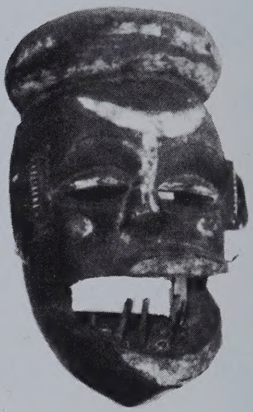


68

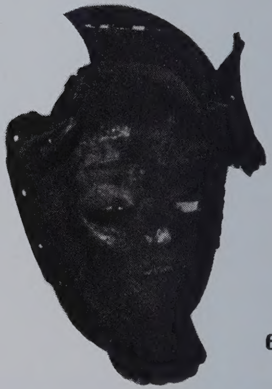
66 EKPO MASK. Ibibio, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 12 in.

The mask may represent an underworld spirit from whom the Ekpo society members derive their power.

67 MASK WITH ARTICULATED JAW AND SKULL CREST. Ibibio, Nigeria. Wood, encrustation, 15 in.

68 TWIST-FACE MASK. Ibibio, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 9 in.

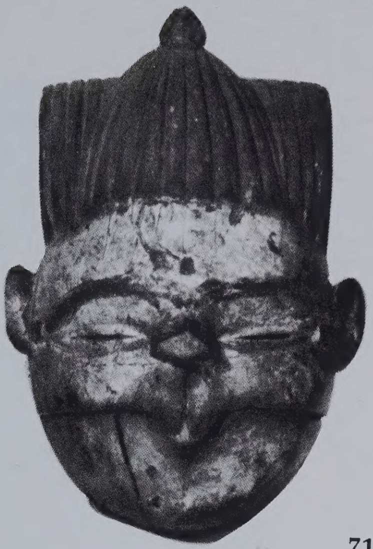
Masks with twisted nose and mouth may suggest mental as well as physical illness. The masks are used in ceremonies of the Ekpo society which, in addition to being an agent of social control, owns masks representing disease-causing spirits. This 19th century example has an articulated jaw.



69

69 INITIATION MASK. Ibibio, Nigeria. Wood, cloth, 10 in.

The delicate features and expression of this horned and bearded mask contrast sharply with other Ibibio styles shown.



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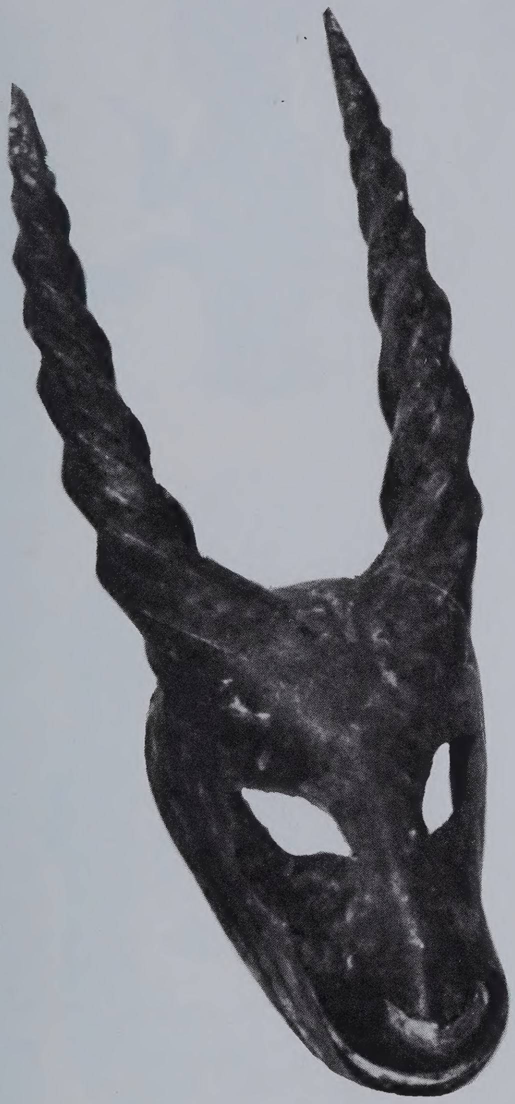

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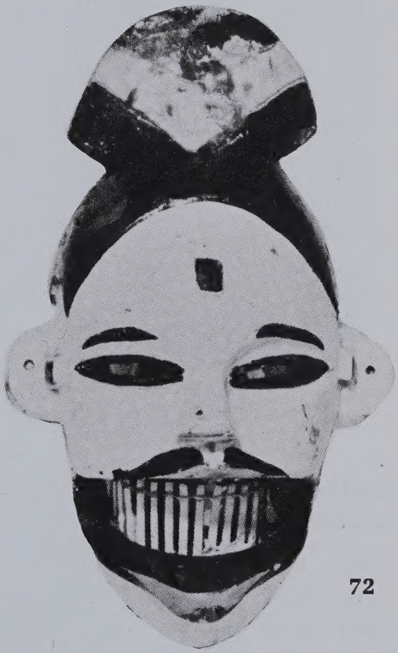


72

70 ANTELOPE MASK. Ogoni, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 18 in.

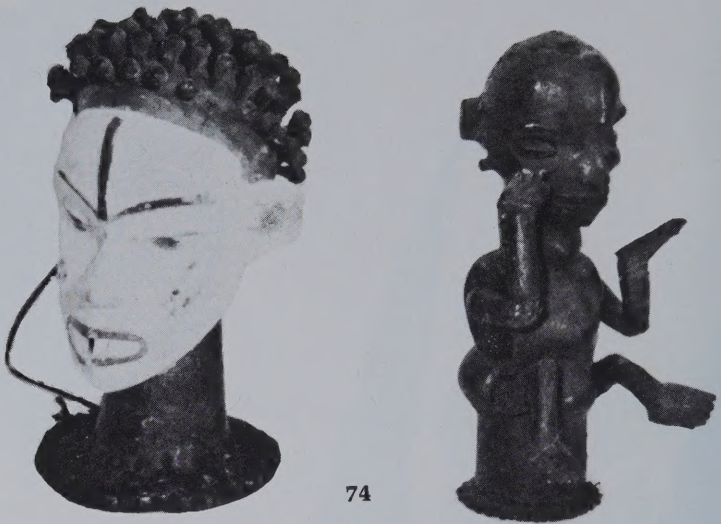
In the past this type of mask was probably associated with hunting activities.

71 SPIRIT MASK. Ogoni, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 9 in.

Spirit masks represent the ghosts of ancestors. The oriental appearance of these and certain other African masks is an interesting feature since they are wholly African in conception. This specimen has an articulated jaw.

72 MAIDEN SPIRIT MASK. Ogonia, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, string, 9 in.

The Ogoni are fond of articulated jaws which seem designed to entertain.



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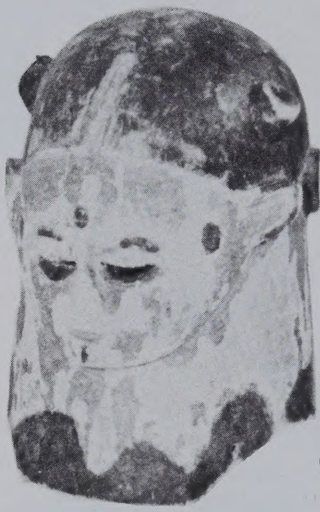


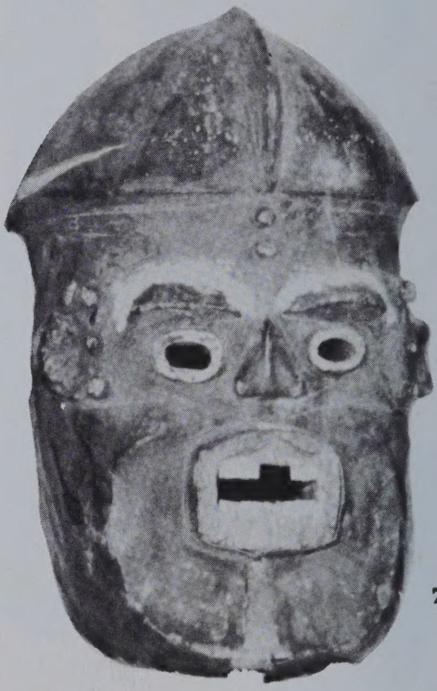
73

73 HELMET MASK. Ogoni, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, encrustation, 15 in.

The Janus mask is two-faced with one side dark and one light (representing male and female). The faces look backward into the past and forward into the future; the mask is, therefore, all powerful, all knowing. This specimen may have been carved by the neighboring Ibibio.

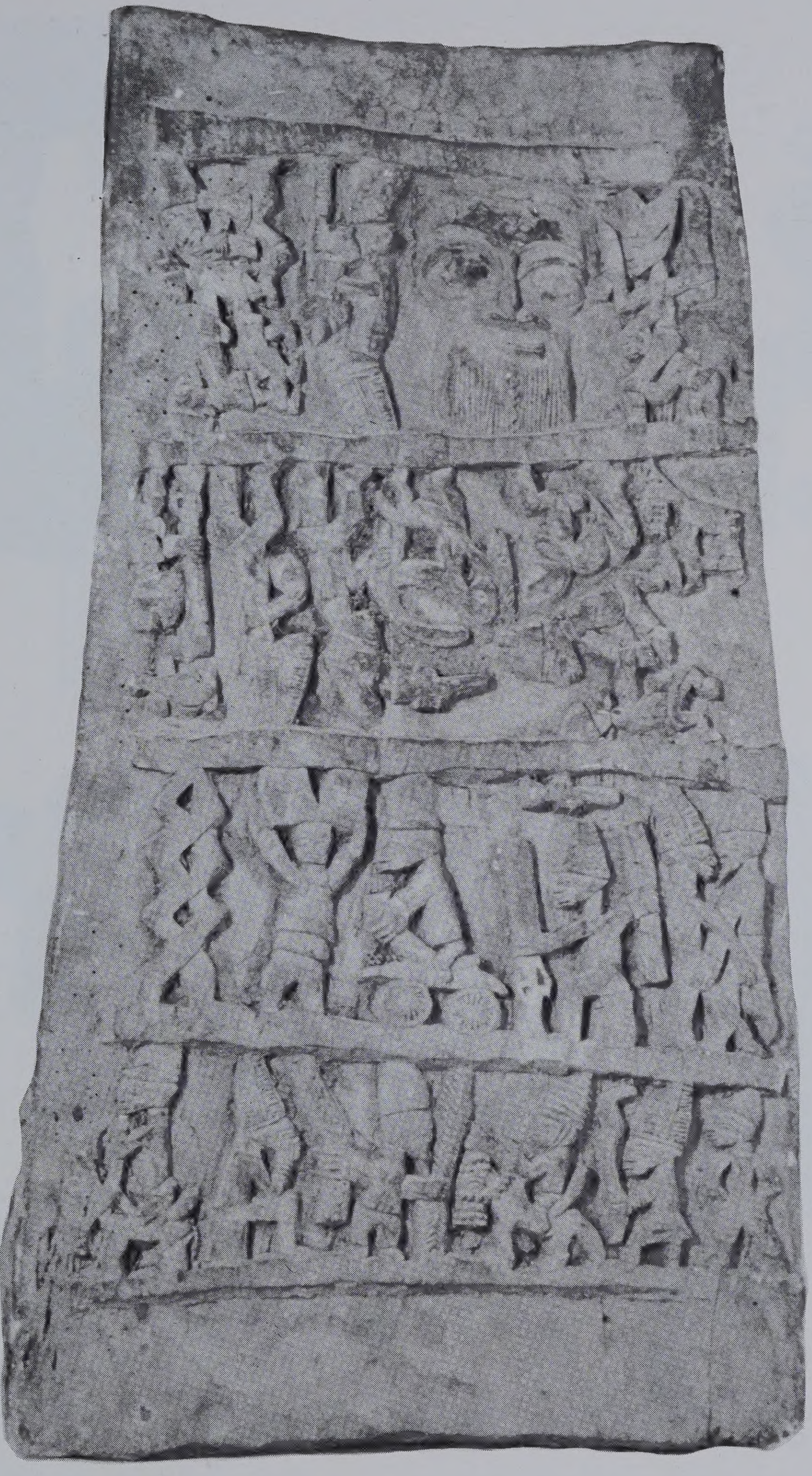
74 HEADPIECES. Ekoi, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, fiber, 12 in.; wood, skin, 13 in.

The highly realistic white-faced headpiece is used by the Ekpe society in a masquerade designed to infuse the community with new life force and fertility. On the second headpiece, both arms and legs are articulated and there are three knobs, indicating cult membership, on each side of the head. The basketry bases of both items indicate that they were worn on the head.



75

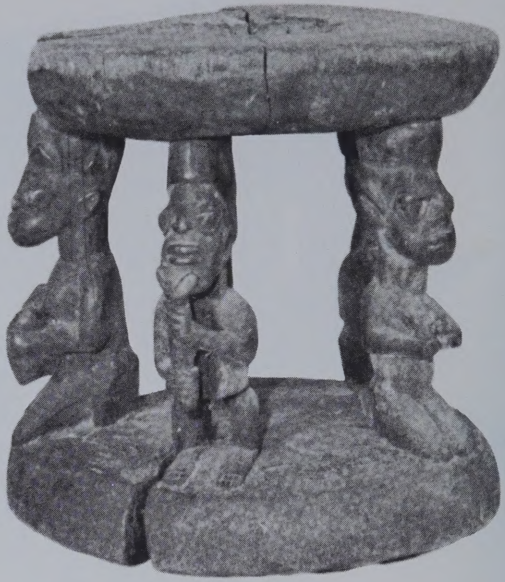
75 HELMET MASK. Widikum, Nigeria. Wood, hide, 16 in.



76

76 DOOR. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, 45 in.

The designs on this old house door are a combination of traditional and secular figures and symbols, for example mother and child, subject and king, figures performing household duties, even a man riding a bicycle.



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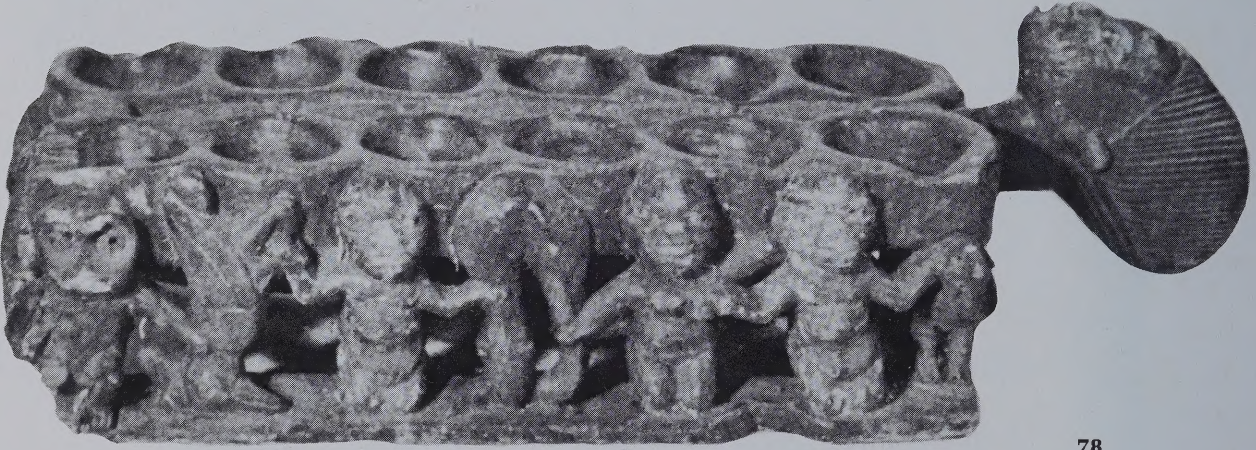


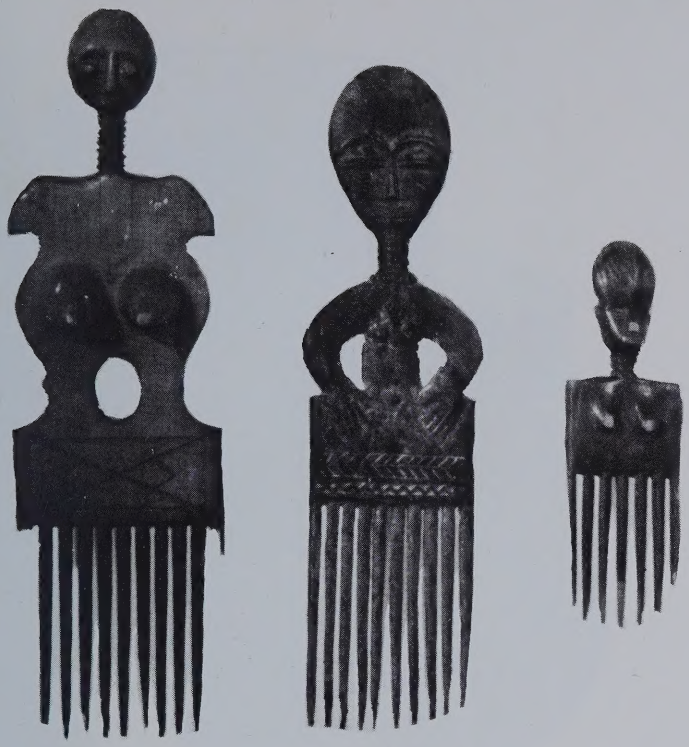
78

77 STOOL. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, encrustation, 25 in.

Five typically Yoruba figures support this 19th century stool. Generally, the height of a stool corresponds to the rank of its owner.

78 GAMEBOARD. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, encrustation, 25 in.

A game called wari, popular all over Africa, is played with this board. The top is a series of cup-like depressions; small round pebbles are used as game pieces. The object is to capture the opponent's "men." This example, richly carved with full relief figures of serpents, monkeys, and a head at one end, is a particularly fine wari board.



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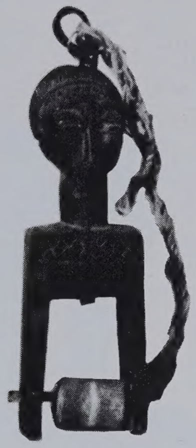
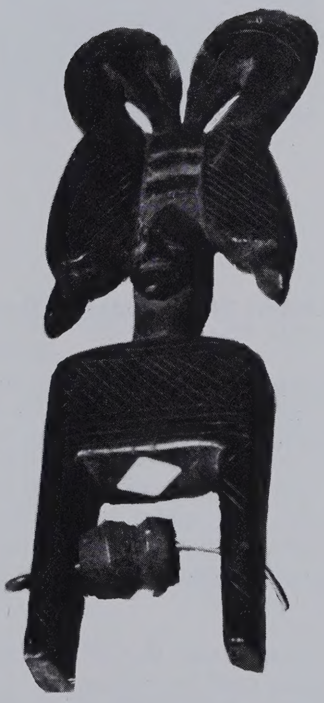


80

79 COMBS. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, 13 in.; 12 in.; 8 in.

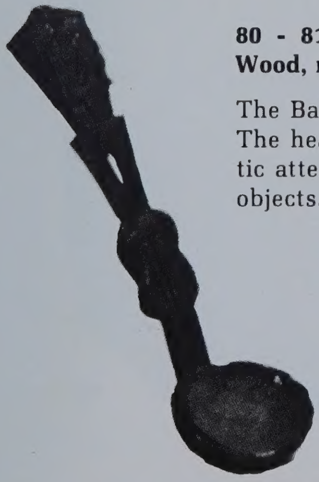
Combs with handles carved to represent heads or torsos are worn as decorative items. It has been reported that in the past the comb was removed and replaced as a form of salutation.



81

80 - 81 HEDDLE PULLEYS. Baule, Ivory Coast. Wood, metal, string, 8 in.; metal, 11 in.

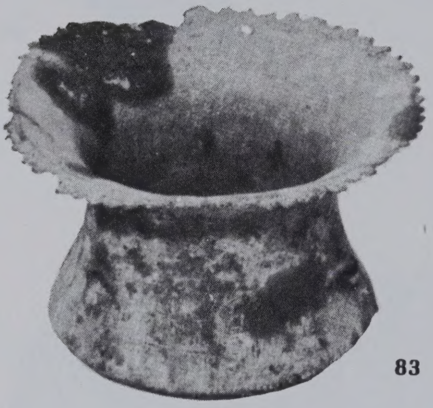
The Baule make some of the finest heddle pulleys. The head with double-bird crest shows the aesthetic attention given to many West African utilitarian objects.



82

82 LADLE. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, encrustation, 13 in.

The carved handle, terminating in a relief head and animal, has a center motif called a wisdom knot, so designated because only a wise man could tie or untie such a knot.



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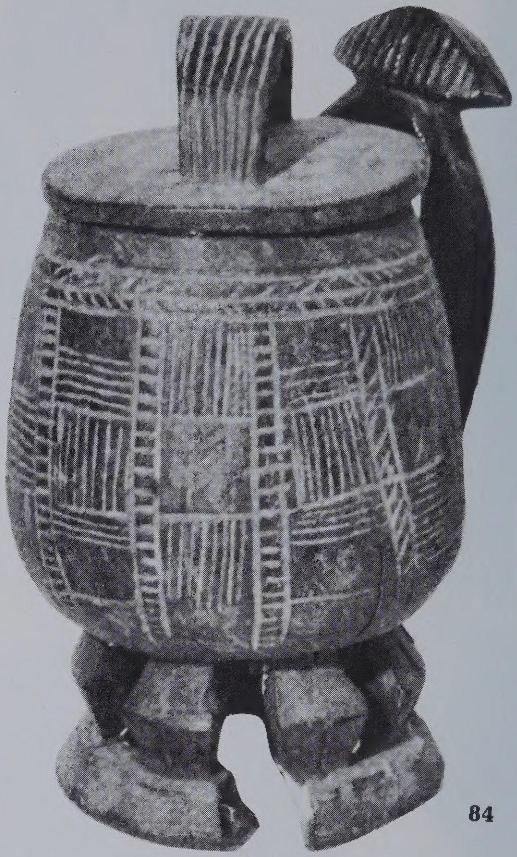


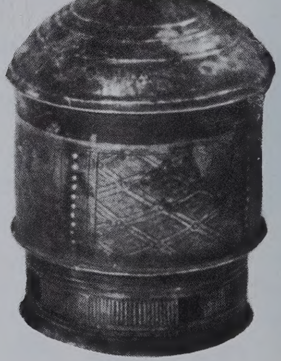
84

83 FLARED RIM VESSEL. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, 6 in.

The heavy brass 18th century container with scalloped rim has four crocodiles applied in relief to a surface incised with geometric designs.

84 LIDDED CONTAINER. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, 12 in.

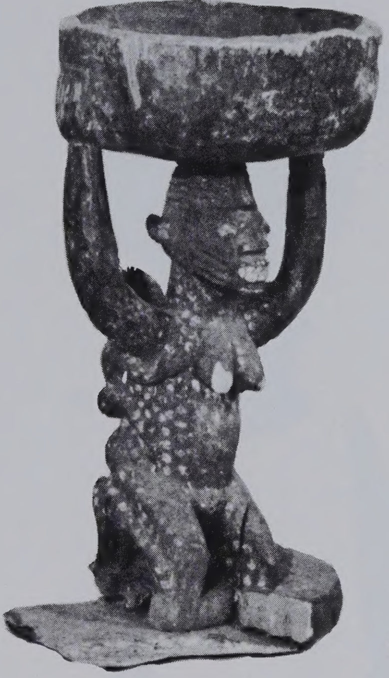
This incised and carved container held magical substances used for curing.



85

85 LIDDED CONTAINER. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, incised, 7 in.

This vessel, made of sheet brass riveted at the seams and incised with geometric and bird designs, is called kuduo. Such containers hold offerings at funerals and other ceremonies.



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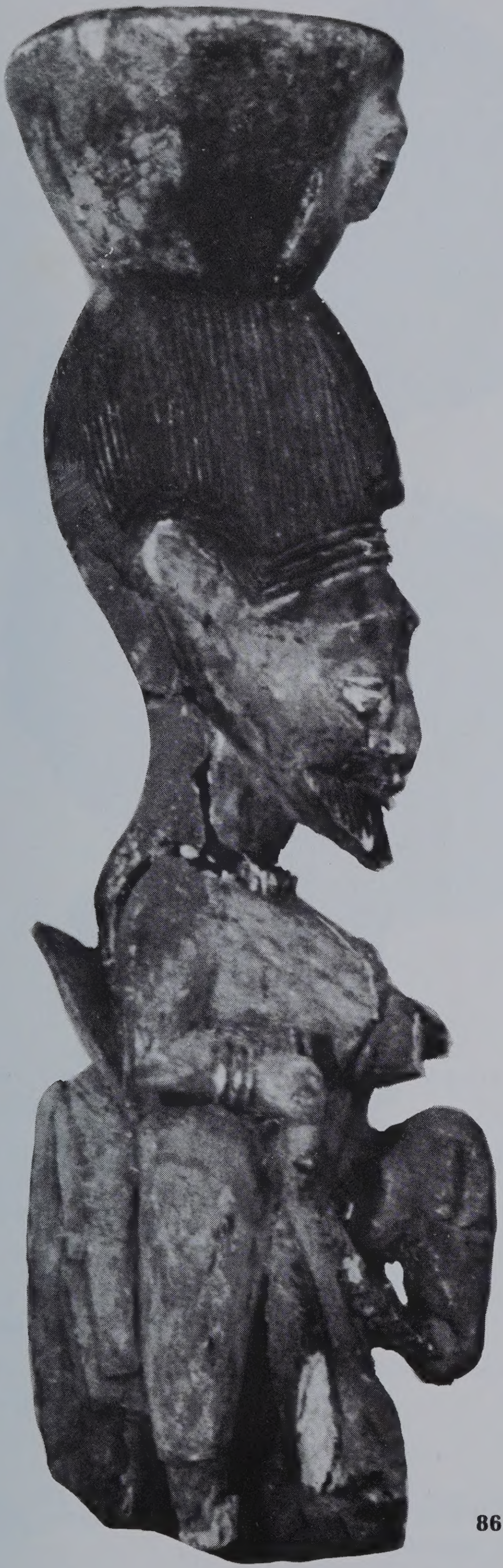


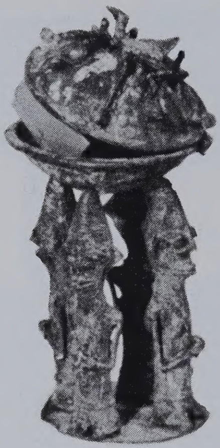
86

86 CONTAINER FOR OBATALA. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 31 in.

The motif of a mounted warrior, called jagun-jagun, is a common one. Obatala, king of the gods, is often shown in this way. The face on the front of the sacrificial bowl represents Osun, a river goddess. The helmet base, which also serves as a pedestal, indicates that this 19th century piece could be worn in processions.

87 CONTAINER FOR OBATALA. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, encrustation, 20 in.

Obatala is a mythic ancestor of the Yoruba, creator of earth, chief god, and protector of the deformed. The container is kept in a corner of the household and is used for shrine ceremonies and carried in processions.



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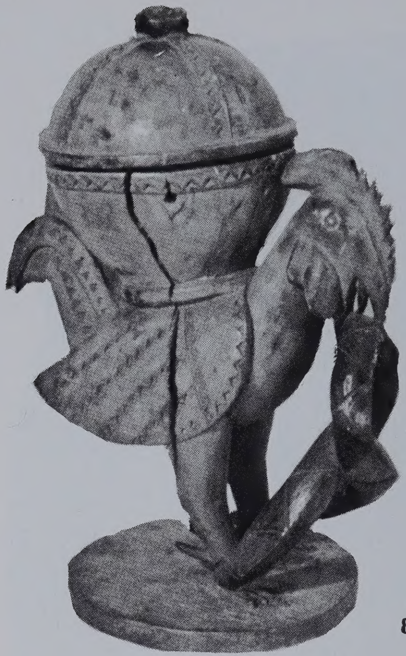
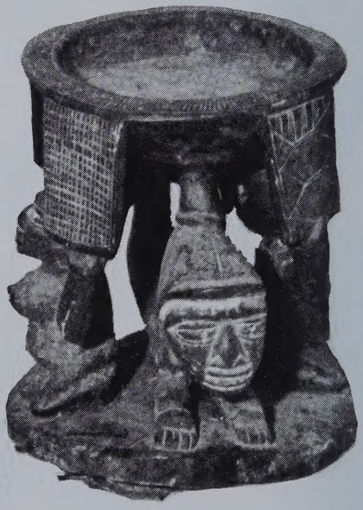


89

88 CEREMONIAL BOWL. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 10 in.

The Ogboni earth-spirit society uses this lidded bowl supported by four torsos.



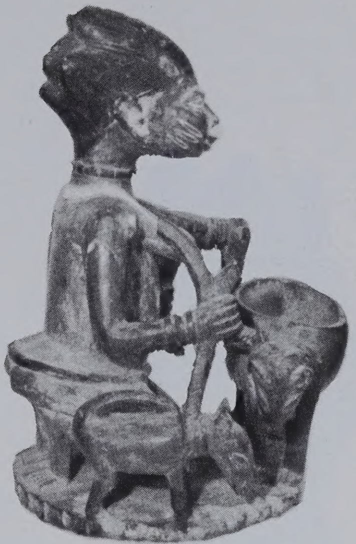
90

89 DIVINATION CONTAINER. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 13 in.

A system of Yoruba divination, known as Ifa, involves manipulation of a set of 16 kola nuts and marking figures in wood dust on a tray. Present and future events are interpreted by the specialist from the patterns formed. When the nuts are not in use, they are stored by the diviner in open or covered bowls such as this one with a cock and serpent. The Yoruba believe that even the gods cannot get along without divination.

90 DIVINATION BOWL. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, metal, pigment, 10 in.

The bowl is supported by a court acrobat and two additional figures.



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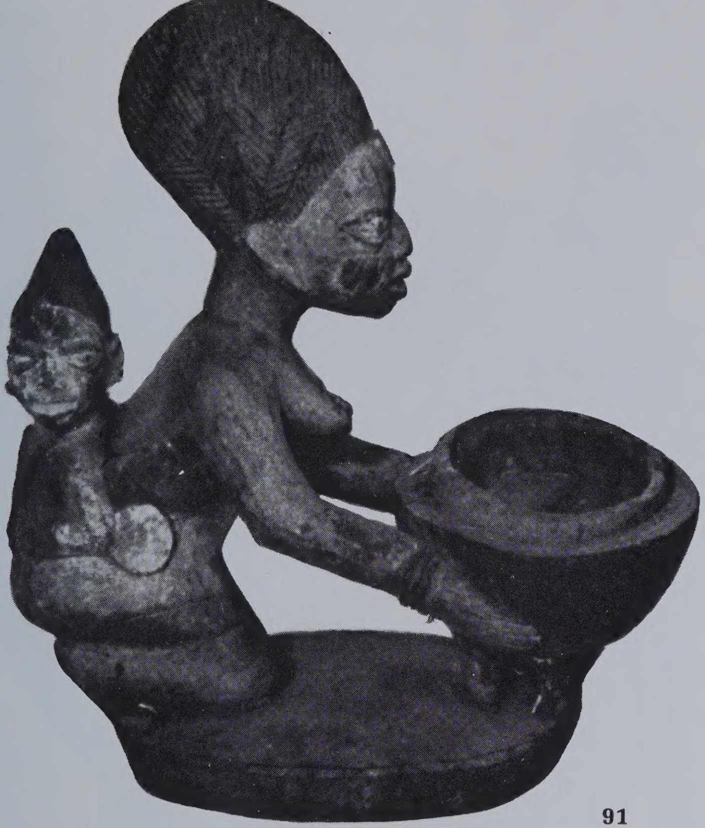

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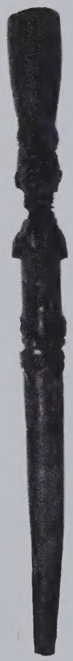


93

94

91 DIVINATION BOWL. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 14 in.

The figures carved on divination bowls are varied and realistic; a mother and child motif is frequently used.

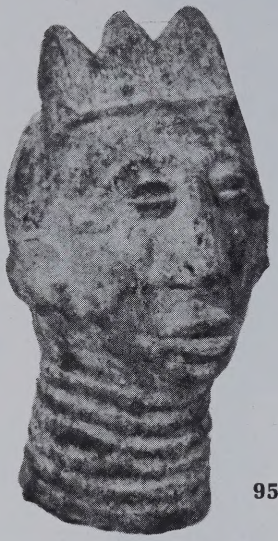
92 DIVINATION BOWL. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 13 in.

This bowl with a woman, two animals, and a bird was carved in the 19th century.

93 DIVINATION TAPPER. Yoruba, Nigeria. Ivory, 16 in.

In order to gain the attention of Ifa, god of divination, and to increase the success of the divination, these tappers are struck against the sides of the tray at the start of the procedure. They are called iro ifa.

94 DIVINATION TAPPER. Yoruba, Nigeria. Ivory, 20 in.



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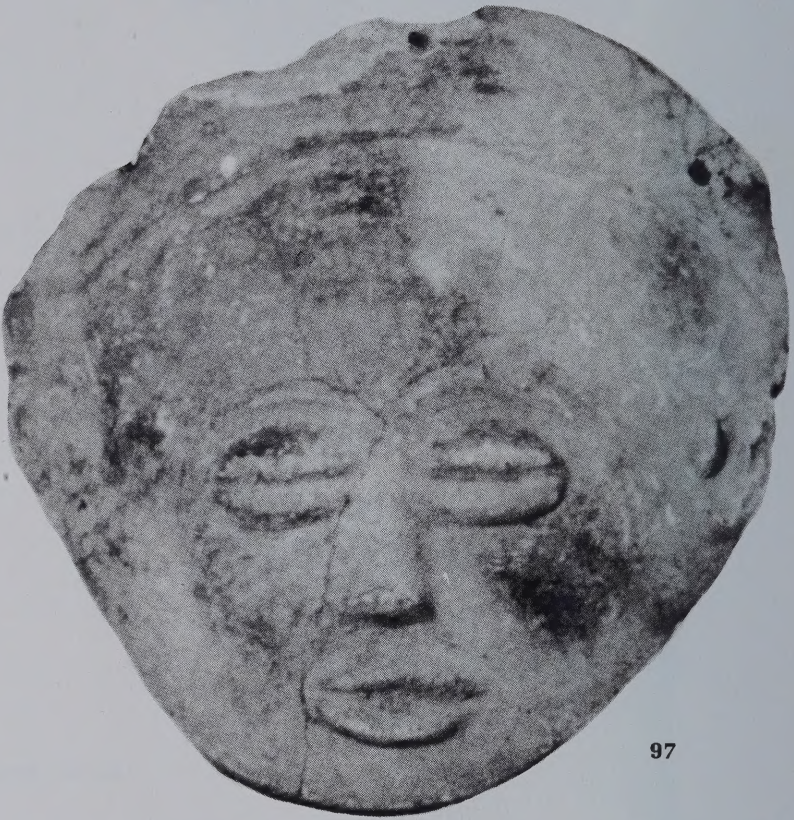

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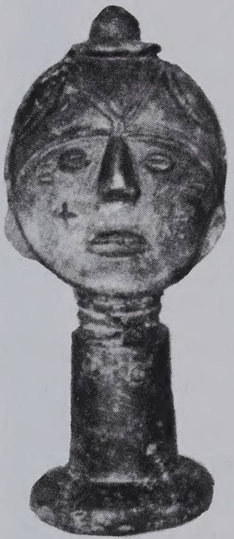


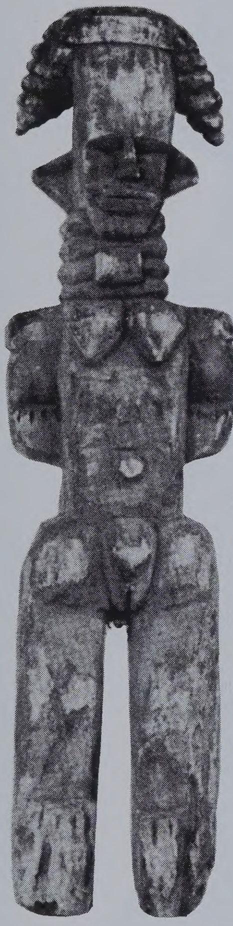
96

95 - 96 FUNERARY HEADS. Ashanti, Ghana. Terra cotta, 12 in.; 11 in.

Images modeled to commemorate deceased relatives or house the spirit are placed in shrines near the cemetery.

97 GRAVE MARKER. Ashanti, Ghana. Terra cotta, 9 in.

These markers, thought to be the stylistic prototype of the akua 'ba dolls (numbers 106, 107, 108), were placed on graves several centuries ago.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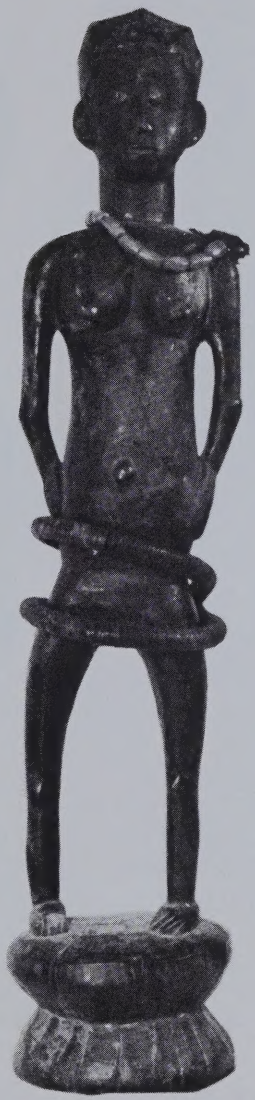
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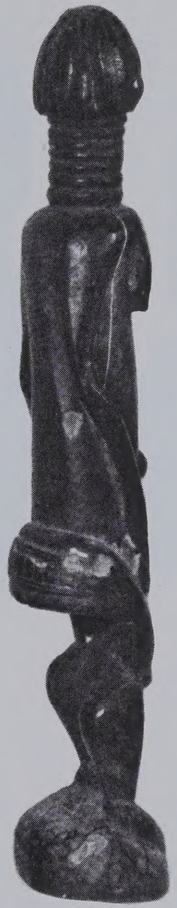

100

98 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Mende, Sierra Leone. Wood, 29 in.

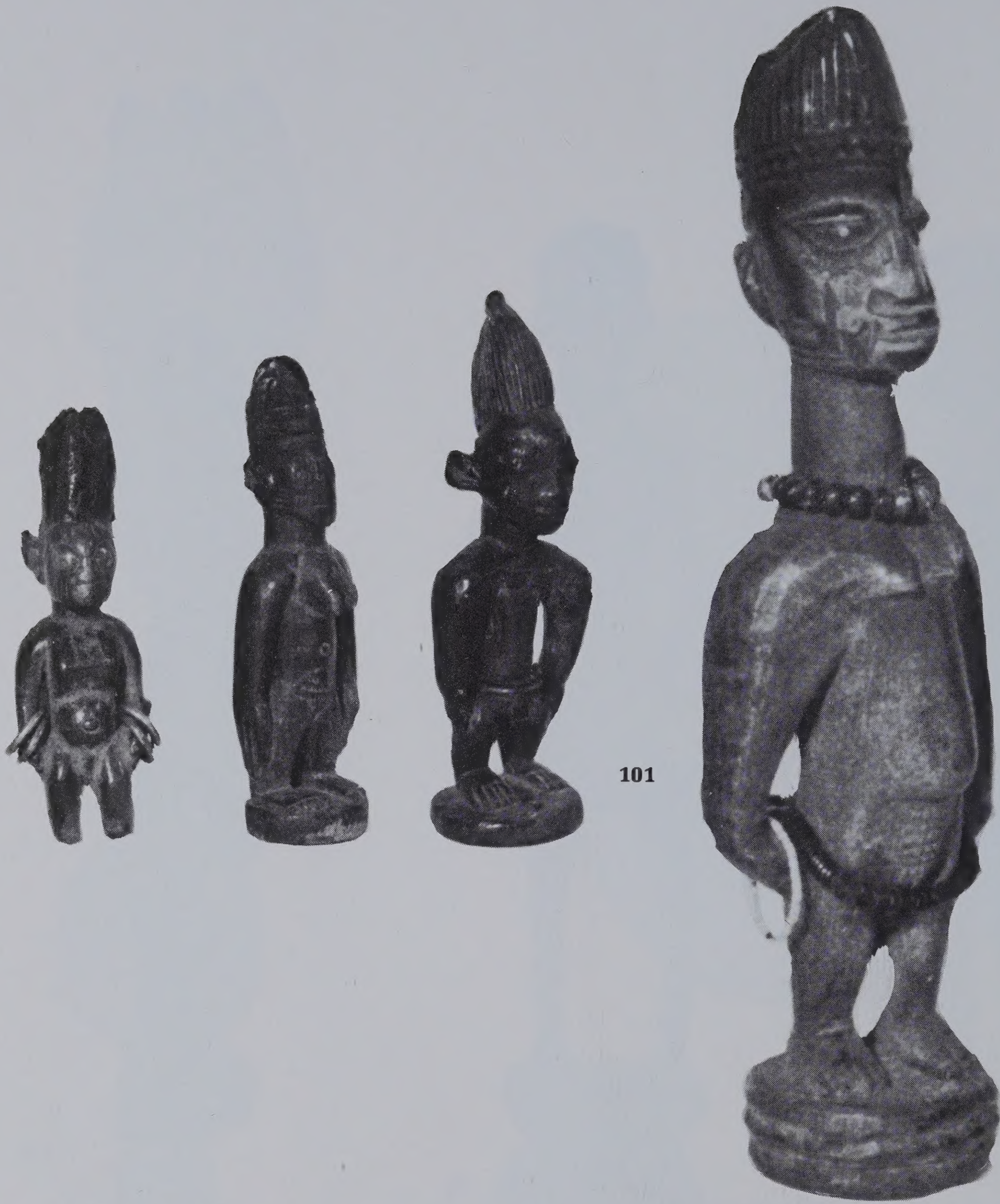
The cubistic pole concept of sculpture, as opposed to the round naturalistic concept, is well illustrated in this 19th century primitive form of ancestor figure.

99 FIGURE. Mende, Sierra Leone. Wood, beads, cowries, 32 in.

The most interesting features of this standing female on socle are her embedded cowrie eyes and necklaces. Her top necklace is of agate; the hip ornaments are of very thin hand-cut ivory discs.

100 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Timne, Sierra Leone. Wood, 23 in.

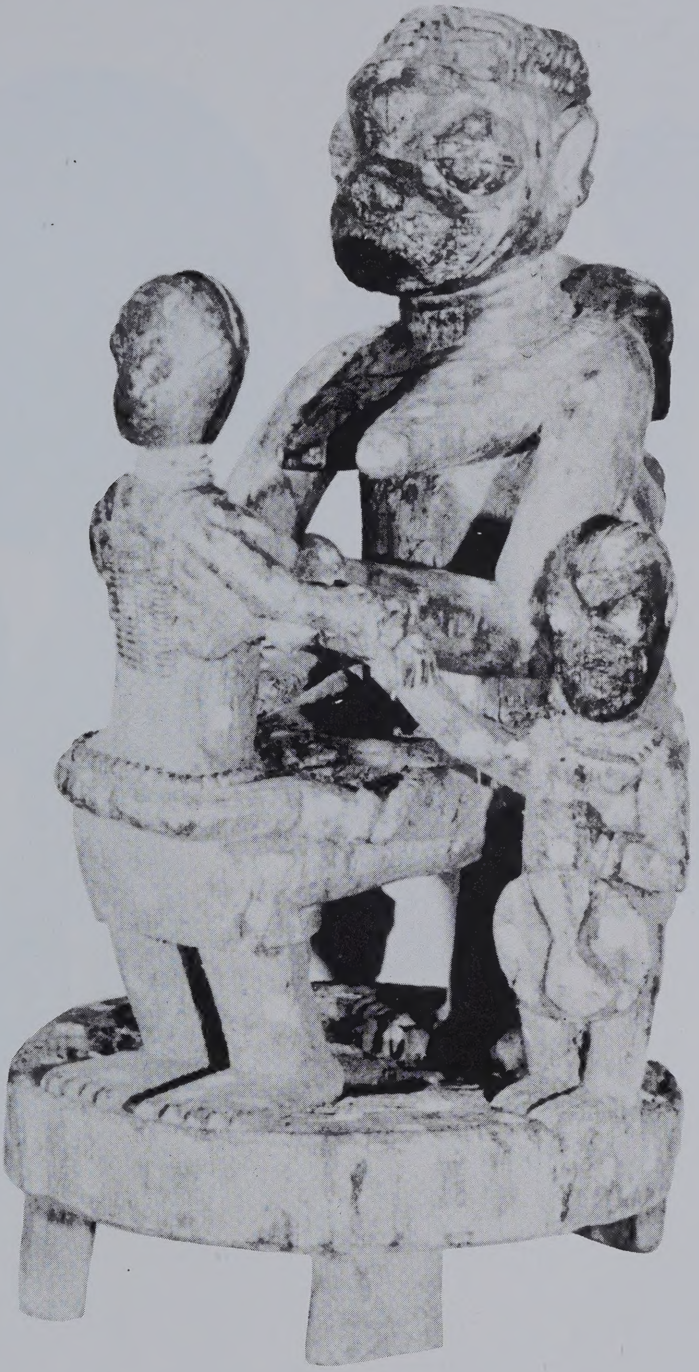
The Timne are part of the Mende complex and the female figure on socle shown here has the typical Mende cut to the bottocks, rolls of neck fat, and cross on the cheek. It is an early piece.



101

101 TWIN FIGURES. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, beads, 10 - 12 in.

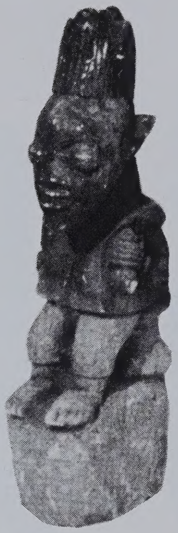
Only the Yoruba, believing the birth of twins to be a mystical event, commemorate twins with these statuettes which are child-like in size but have adult features. When a twin dies a Sculptor carves one of these ibeji and it is ritually fed and washed by the mother to appease its spirit.



102

102 SHRINE SCULPTURE. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 30 in.

This 19th century work of art features a maternity figure with retainers set on four peg legs. The face has been eroded by ritual touching with palm oil. Bits of wood have been ritually removed and eaten for it is believed that such sculpture is the embodiment of ancestor power and, therefore, of the life force from generation to generation.



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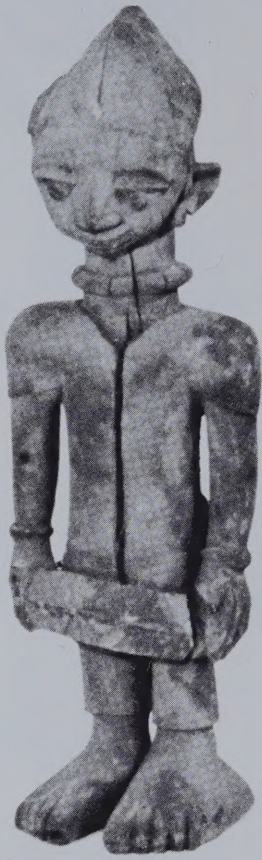

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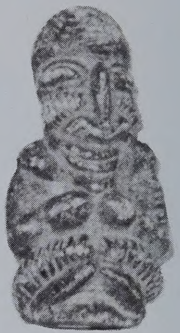


105

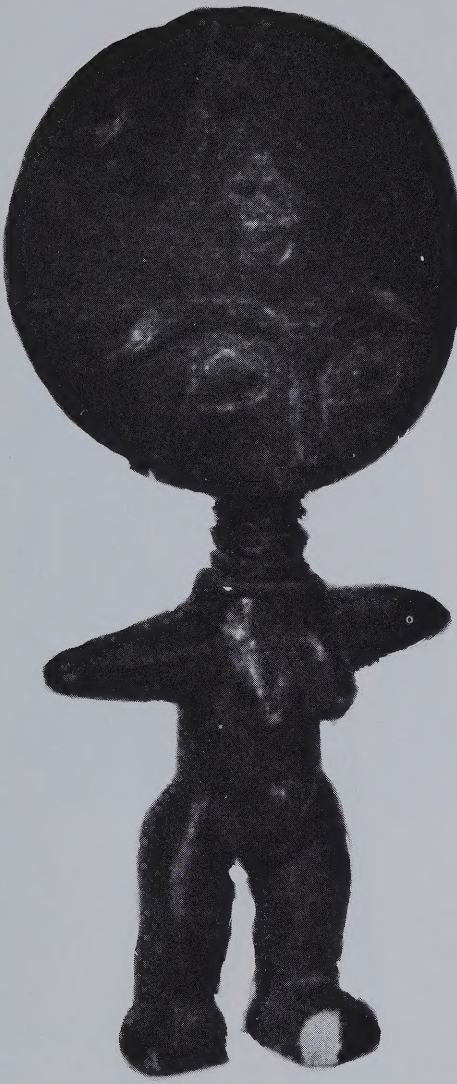
103 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Yoruba, Nigeria. Steatite, encrustation, 12 in.

Ancestor figures are rarely made of steatite.

104 STANDING MALE FIGURE WITH SERPENT. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, encrustation, 19 in.

105 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Kissi, Guinea. Steatite, 8 in.

These little ancestor and prophet figures, known as pomdo, have a long history in the area. The Kissi and Mende place them in rice fields to make their crops prosper. They are also reportedly kept on family altars and used for divination.



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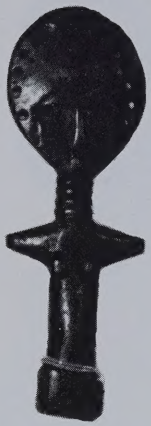

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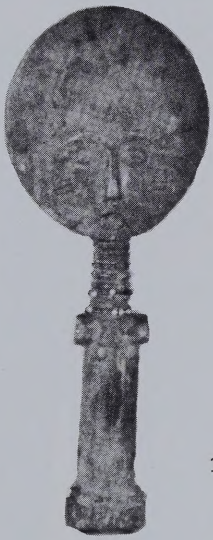
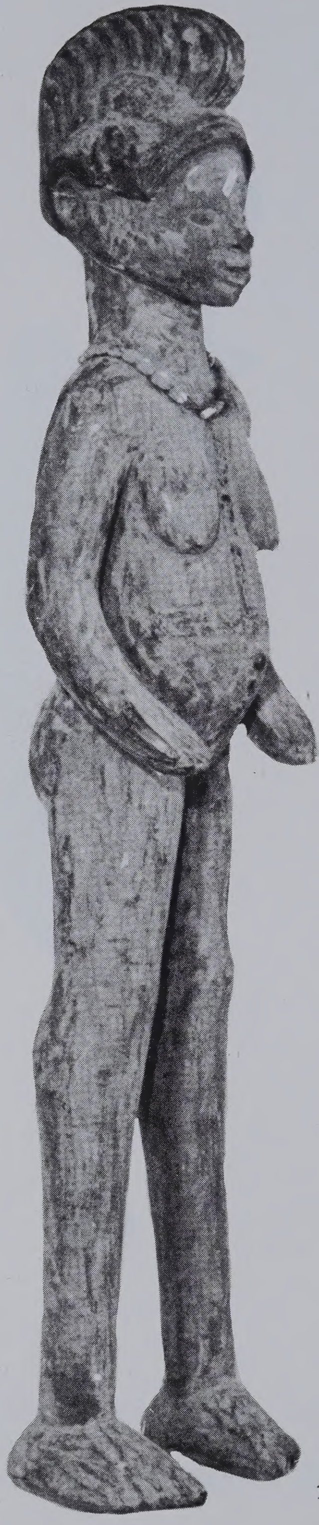


108

106 - 107 - 108 FERTILITY CHARMS. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, beads, 10 in.; 8 in.; 13 in.

The akua mma (sing. akua 'ba) dolls are carried by girls and pregnant women with the intention of insuring the birth of a beautiful child. Full-figure dolls are less common than cylindrical torso types. The discoid head, facial features, and long neck express the Ashanti ideal of beauty.



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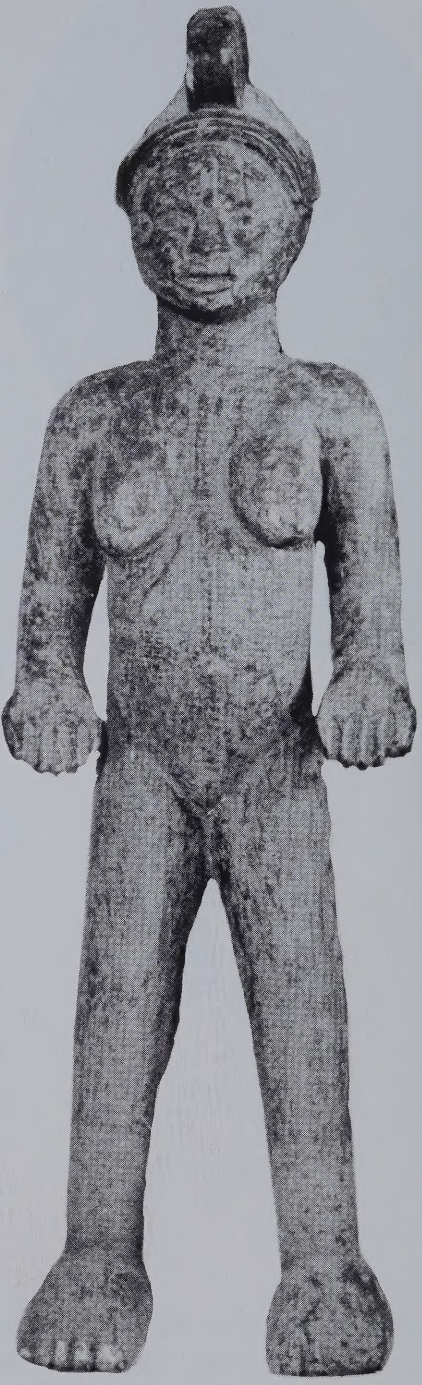
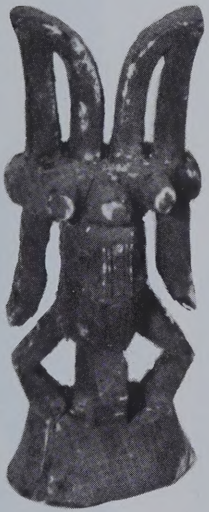


110

109 - 110 ANCESTOR FIGURES. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, beads, 46 in.; 43 in.

Deceased ancestors, who may confer benefits or misfortune upon the living, are represented by figures placed in the lineage's shrine where they are sacrificed to and venerated.



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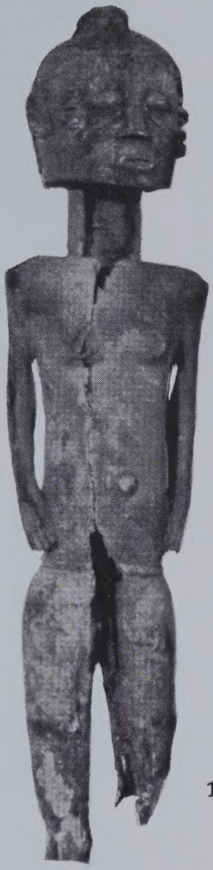

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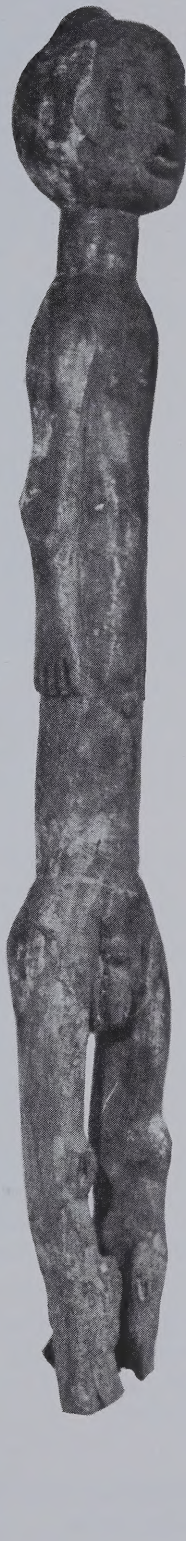


113

111 PERSONAL SHRINE. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, encrustation, 12 in.

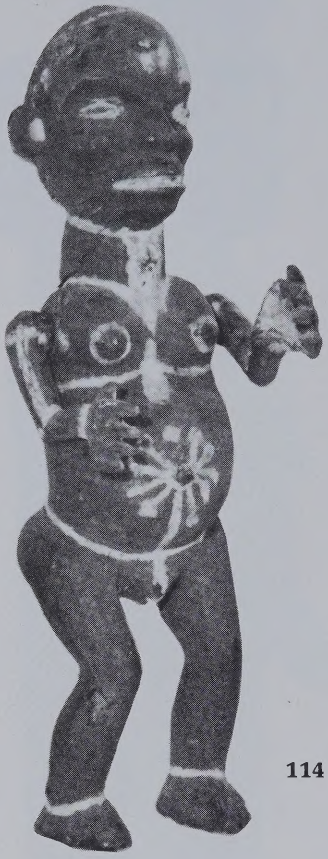
These objects, called ikenga, are part of the cult of the right hand which signifies physical, in contrast to mental, powers. Warriors and other high-ranking men through sacrifices to their ikenga attempt to insure success in material and practical endeavors.

112 FIGURE. Tiv, Nigeria. Wood, 27 in.

It is believed that these figures are village guardians used to ward off malevolent spirits. The legs are rotted away on this piece indicating it was planted in the ground. Made of heavy iron wood, its style is archaic (19th century).

113 FIGURE. Tiv, Nigeria. Wood, 42 in.

Tribal facial marks are carved into the heavy wood of this 19th century piece.



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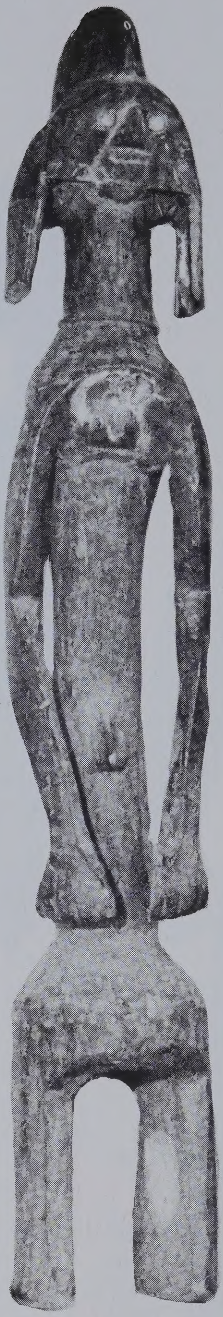

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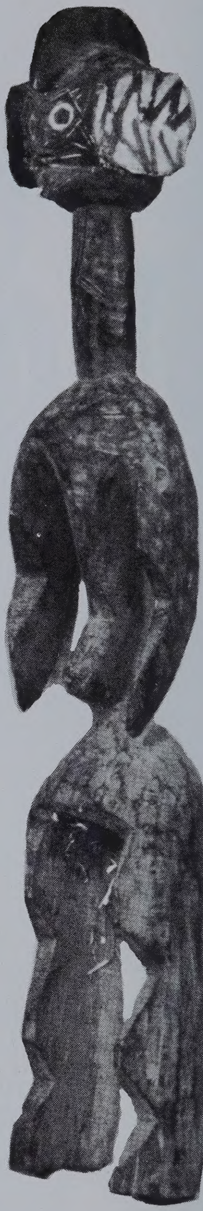


116

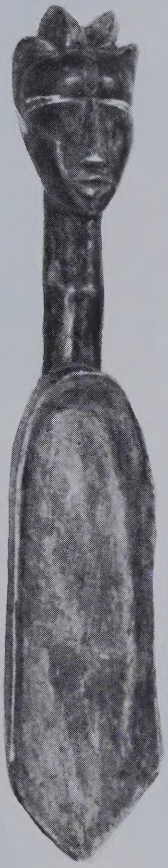
114 FIGURE. Ekoi, Nigeria. Wood, skin, pigment, 22 in.

The articulated arms on this standing female figure were carved separately. The whole piece is covered with skin (probably antelope); in the past human skin was used.

115 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Chamba, Nigeria. Wood, encrustation, 41 in.

The powerful head and curvature of the arms of this very early period Chamba piece are in the best classical style.

116 MALE ANCESTOR FIGURE. Mumuye, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 37 in.



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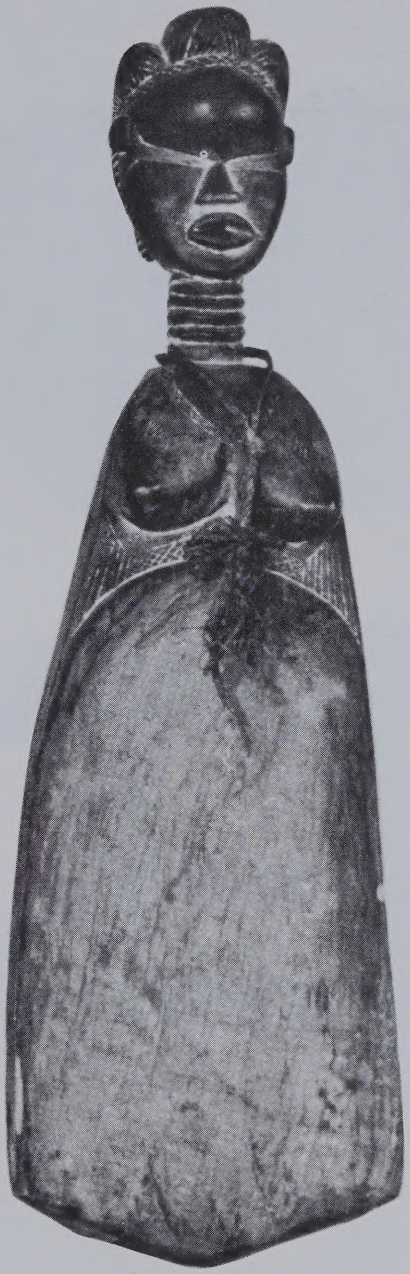
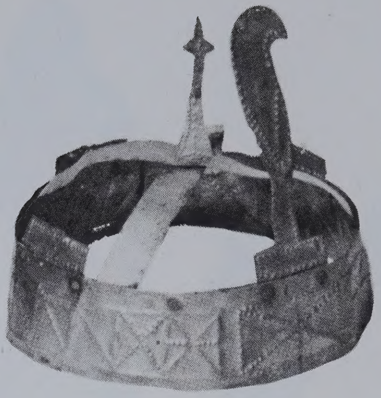


118

117 CEREMONIAL SPOON. Dan, Ivory Coast. Wood, pigment, 28 in.

One of the many interesting stories surrounding the po spoon says that at festivals each Dan village elected a kind of "wonder-girl" — someone known for her hospitality and generosity. Competing girls were carried about in hammocks distributing gifts. The girl chosen was given such a spoon which was used as a dance staff and to distribute rice on ceremonial occasions. It is likely that the "wonder-girl" and the chief's wife were one and the same since the latter was in the best position to be hospitable. The po spoon takes many forms and is regarded as a living being.

118 CEREMONIAL SPOON. Dan, Ivory Coast. Wood, fiber, pigment, 29 in.



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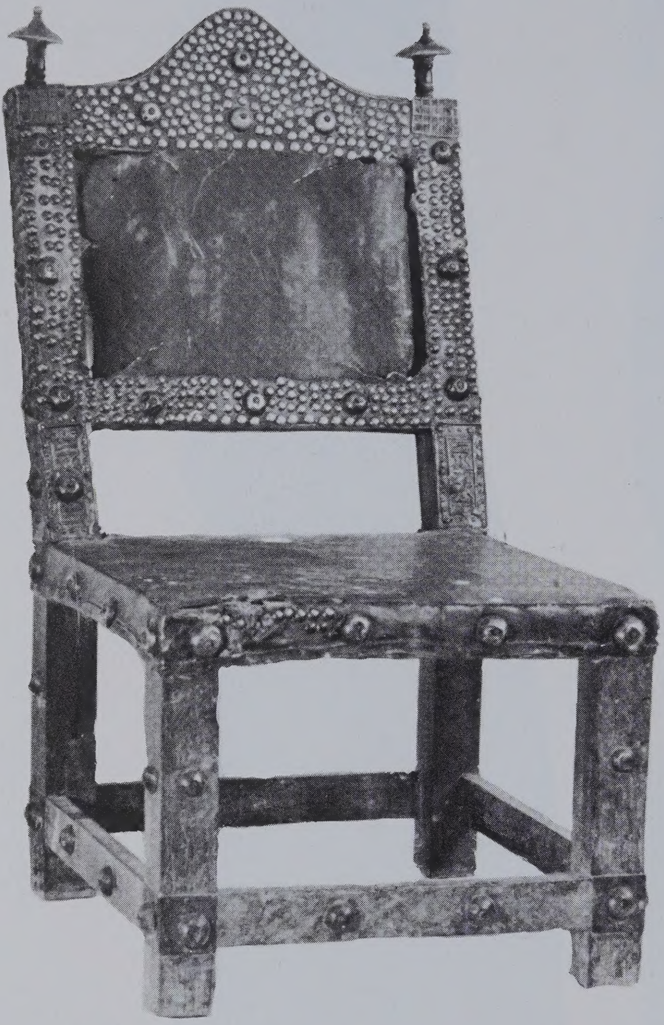

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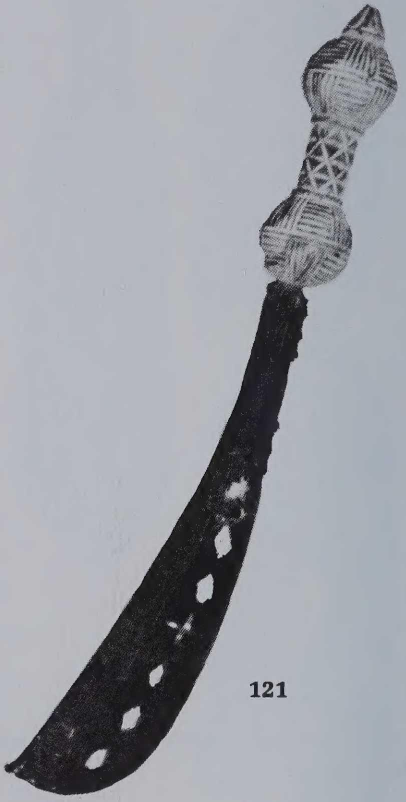


121

119 ROYAL CHAIR. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, hide, brass mountings and tacks, 28 in.

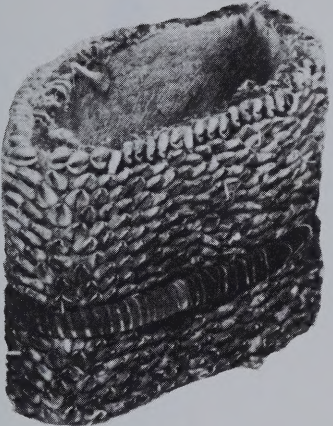
Chairs copied from 16th and 17th century European prototypes are used by chiefs as status symbols.

120 CEREMONIAL CROWN. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, 7 in.

This incised sheet brass headpiece with stylized feather was probably worn by a minor chief.

121 CEREMONIAL SWORD. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, metal, 20 in.

Ceremonial swords, derived from older battle swords, are symbols of office displayed when a chief attends a public ceremony. They are also "badges of credence" for messengers.



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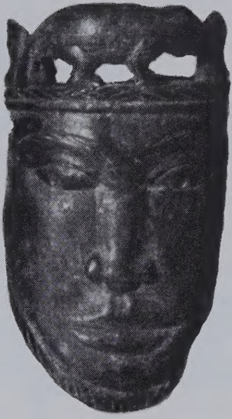

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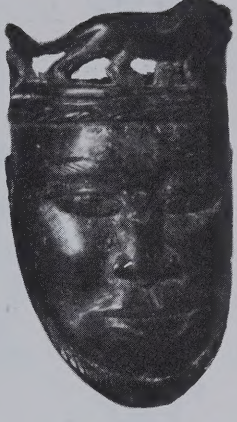

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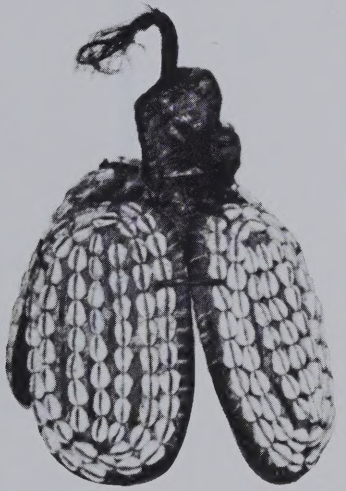


123

122 SKULL CASE. Yoruba, Nigeria. Cloth, leather, cowries, 14 in.

Ancestral skulls are kept in these ile ore (meaning "house of the head").

123 HEADDRESS. Yoruba, Nigeria. Leather, fiber, cowries, hair, 8 in.

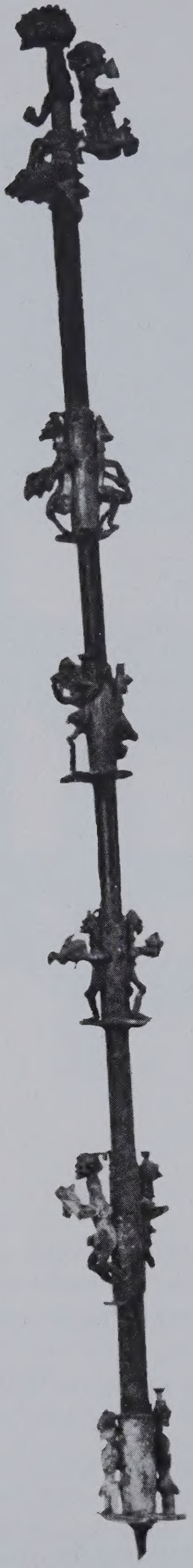
This "house of the head" (ile ore) cap has four flaps and is either worn by a person of high rank or used on top of the cylindrical skull case. The cowries embellishing it are imported from the Indian Ocean and are a sign of wealth. Such caps are often depicted on sculpture.

124 BELT MASK WITH CHAMELEON CREST. Yoruba, Nigeria. Ivory, 6 in.

These small ivory masks are strung on belts and worn ceremonially by kings among the Yoruba and Benin.

125 BELT MASK WITH LION CREST. Yoruba, Nigeria. Ivory, 6 in.

RITUAL SOCIETY EQUIPMENT



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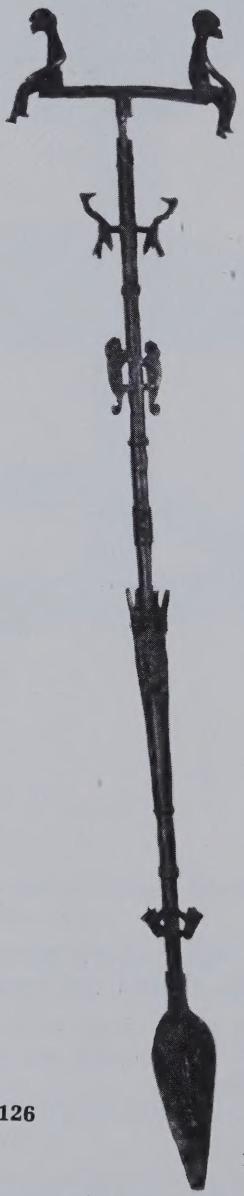

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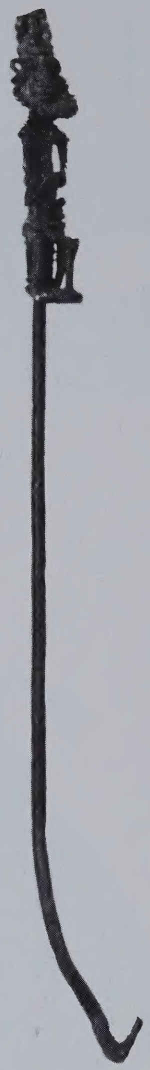

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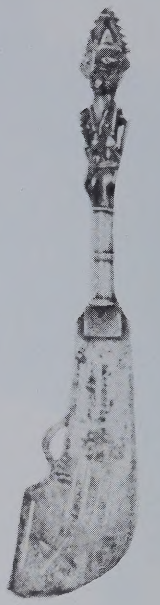


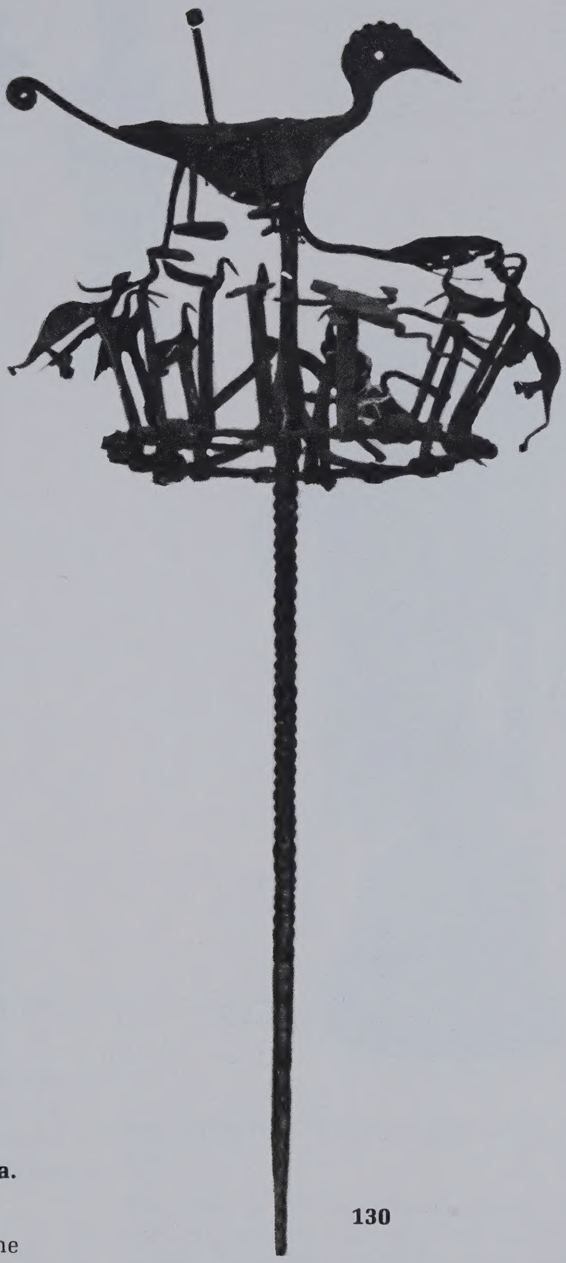
129

126 MESSENGER STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 52 in.

This chief's messenger staff with six rows of double figures is sent with credentials by warriors. It was probably commissioned by the Ogboni society, whose members are all head men and chiefs.

127 MESSENGER STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 39 in.

The turtle, stork or crane, and chameleon are a common trilogy of African animals. The two figures atop this staff probably represent the heavenly twins.



130

128 CEREMONIAL STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, iron, 26 in.

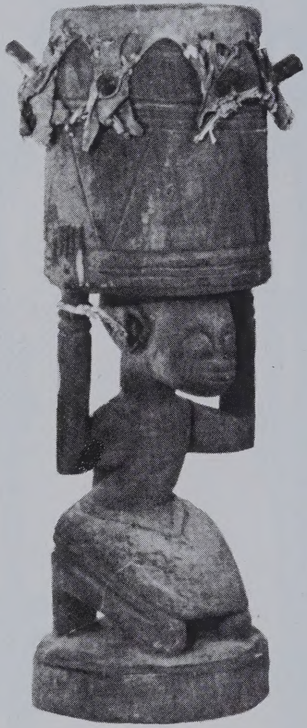
This staff with a seated figure is owned and used by the head blacksmith and indicates his position.

129 CEREMONIAL SWORD. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 19 in.

Ogun is the god of war worshipped by the smiths. The ada ogun, as this sword is called, serves as a symbol of his cult. It is carried by Ogun devotees during ritual dances and processions.

130 OSANYIN STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Iron, 30 in.

Osanyin is the orisha (god) of medical science. His followers stick these staffs into the ground and sacrifice eggs and kola nuts. Legend says that the birds which top the staff came down to the world and scratched up sand from the sea to form land.



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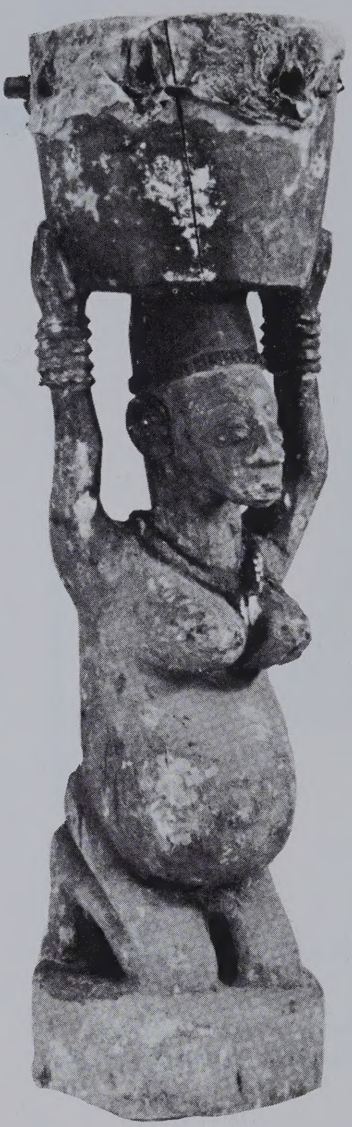
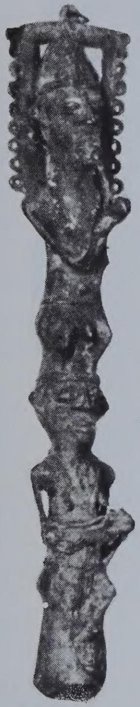


132

131 DRUM FOR OBATALA. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, hide, encrustation, 20 in.

132 DRUM FOR OBATALA. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, hide, 34 in.

The anthropomorphic drum surmounts a kneeling female figure. Both the Yoruba and Ashanti ornament ceremonial drums with elaborate carvings.



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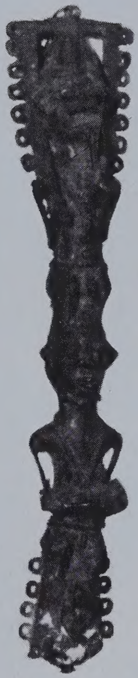

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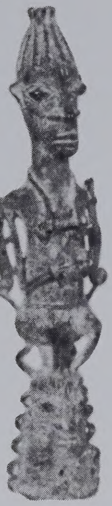

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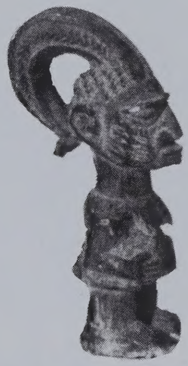

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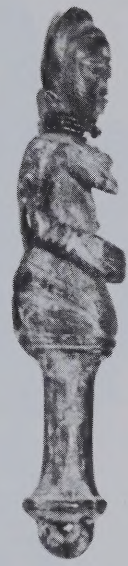


137

133 FIGURATED STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 19 in.

The staff, called edan, is one of a pair of heads or figures on iron rods and joined together at the top by a chain. Such staffs are used by the Ogboni society, concerned with interpreting and carrying out the law.

134 FIGURATED STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, iron, 19 in.

The lower iron spike portions of these staffs are not shown. The cast motif is of superimposed figures.

135 FIGURATED STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Brass, 14 in.

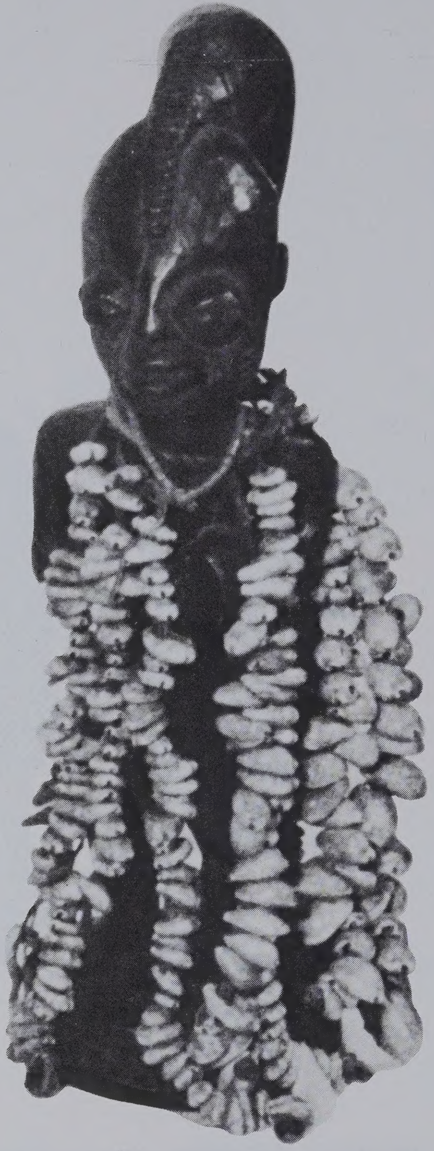
This figurated edan is also used by the Ogboni society, perhaps in connection with an earth cult.

136 SHANGO FIGURINE. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, 5 in.

The ram is the sacrificial animal of the Shango cult. Its horns resemble the double-headed axe, which in turn resembles the thunderbolt that Shango, the god of thunder, hurls down in fury. Legend says that these axes first dropped to earth during a thunderstorm.

137 SHANGO STAFF. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, beads, encrustation, 12 in.

Among the Yoruba kneeling represents submission. This staff with kneeling woman is carried by Shango devotees.



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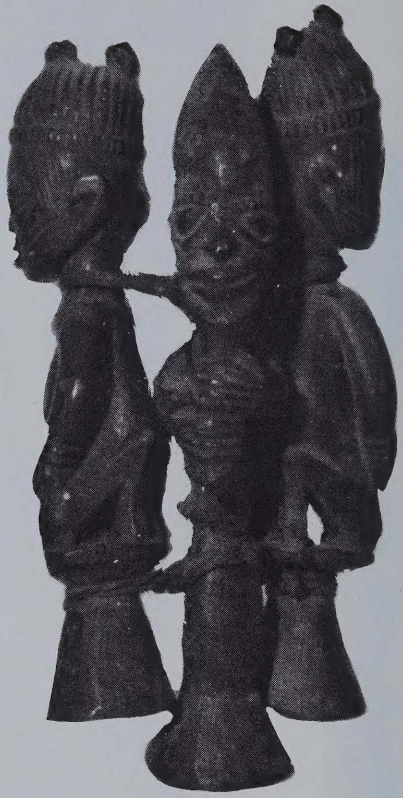


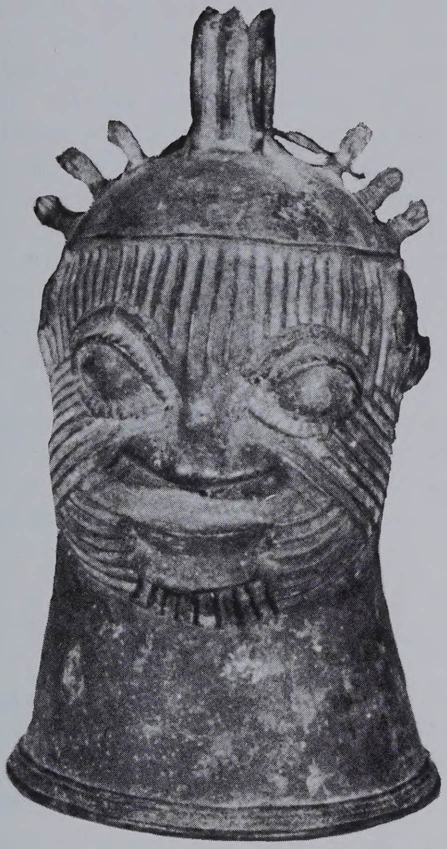
139

138 ESHU-ELEGBA FIGURINE. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, cowries, beads, 13 in.

This standing male drummer decorated with strings of cowries and beads is a dance wand carried by members of the Eshu-Elegba cult.

139 ESHU-ELEGBA STAFFS. Yoruba, Nigeria. Wood, leather, 10 in.

Eshu-Elegba is an important deity among the Yoruba. A sly trickster, who must be appeased, he represents man's darker, more impulsive side. The small dance wands pictured here are lashed together, and are usually carved by women devotees.



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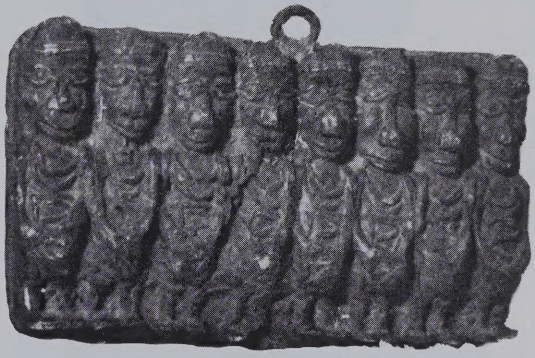


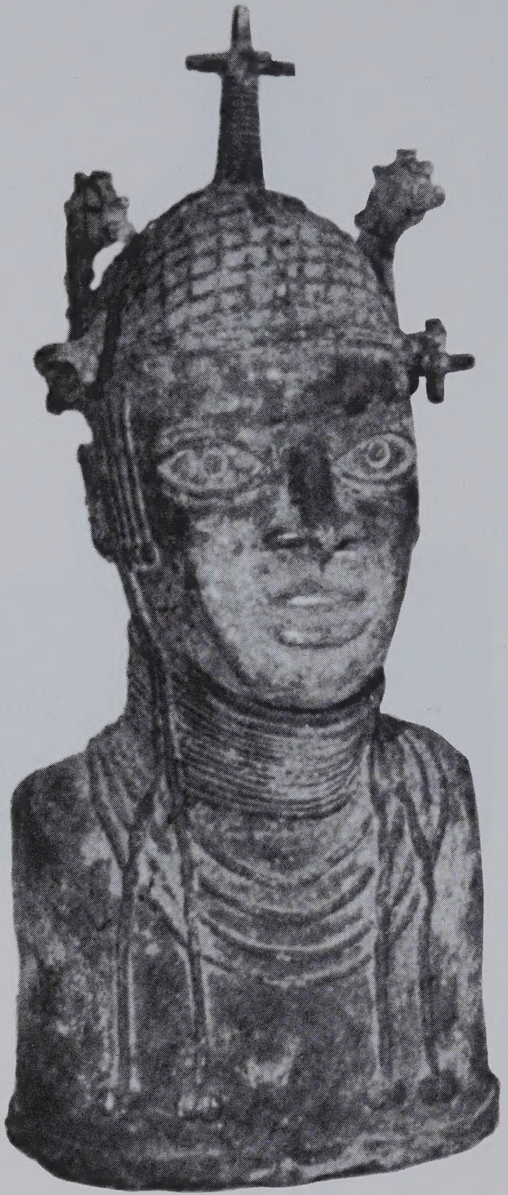
141

140 BELL. Benin, Nigeria. Bronze, 9 in.

Placed on the altar of an ancestor, the bell was produced in the 18th century. For centuries the Benin kingdom produced bronzes using the lost wax (cire perdue) method. The subject was first sculpted in beeswax over a clay core, then carefully covered with a layer of clay. When the clay hardened, the wax was melted and ran out. Molten metal was poured into the mold; later the clay was removed and the casting refined and polished.

141 PLAQUE WITH EIGHT DRUMMERS. Benin, Nigeria. Bronze, 7 in. high.

During the middle-period (15th and 16th centuries) when Benin bronze casting reached its zenith, visitors to the Oba's court saw plaques similar to this modern one hanging, en masse, from support pillars.



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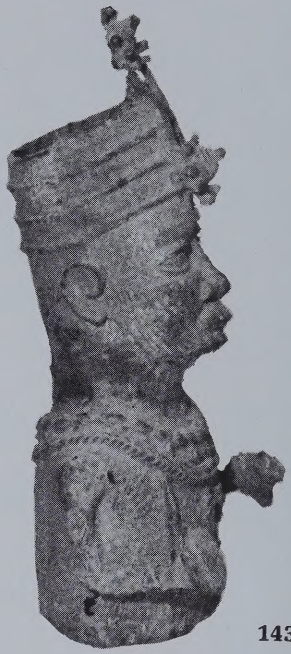


143

142 ROYAL TORSO. Benin, Nigeria. Bronze, 16 in.

Memorial heads and torsos portray specific royal persons and are placed on altars dedicated to their memory along with other royal status items.

143 ROYAL TORSO. Benin, Nigeria, Bronze, 15 in.

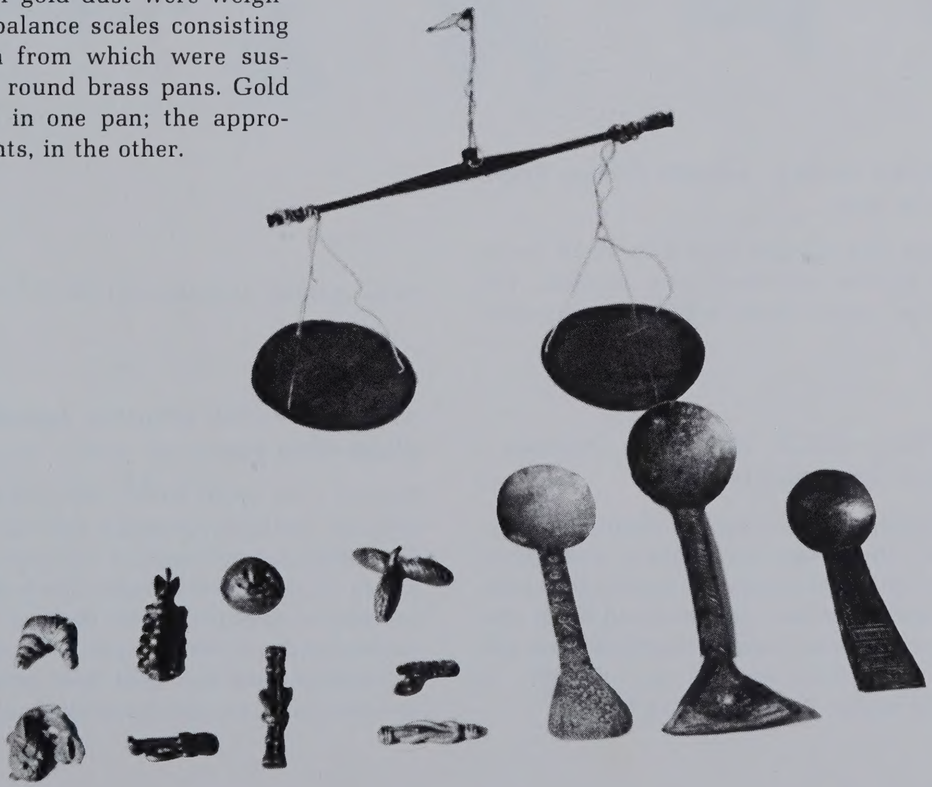
A large carved ivory tusk can be set upright in the head of this recent bronze torso.

GOLD WEIGHTS

The Ashanti used gold dust as a form of currency in the pre-colonial period. Payments were measured by a complex system of weights, usually made of brass. The equipment necessary in a transaction consisted of scales, spoons, scoops, sieves for removing impurities, boxes of different sizes, and weights. Weights, produced by a privileged class of goldsmiths using the lost wax process, could be brought up to standard by adding lead, resine, or wire. To make a weight lighter bits of metal were removed by chipping or filing. Some weights were made by using natural objects such as seeds and insects, in place of wax, as models. Weights are divided according to style into geometrical and figurative forms.

144 SCALES, SPOONS, WEIGHTS.
Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, scale beam 5 in.; spoons, less than 6 in.; weights, all less than 2 in.

Small amounts of gold dust were weighed on sensitive balance scales consisting of a brass beam from which were suspended a pair of round brass pans. Gold dust was placed in one pan; the appropriate gold weights, in the other.



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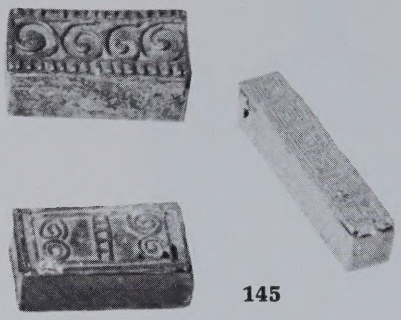

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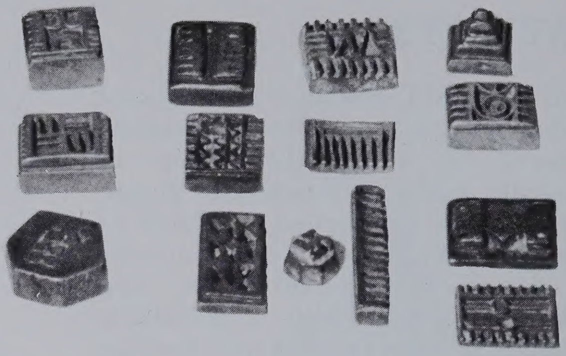

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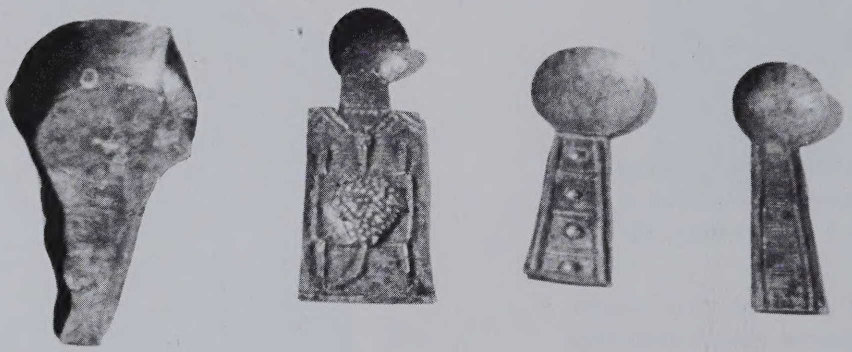


147

145 GOLD DUST BOXES. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, all less than 3 in. long.

Loose gold dust was usually stored in small boxes made by the hollow cast lost wax method. The lids most often were decorated with geometric designs.

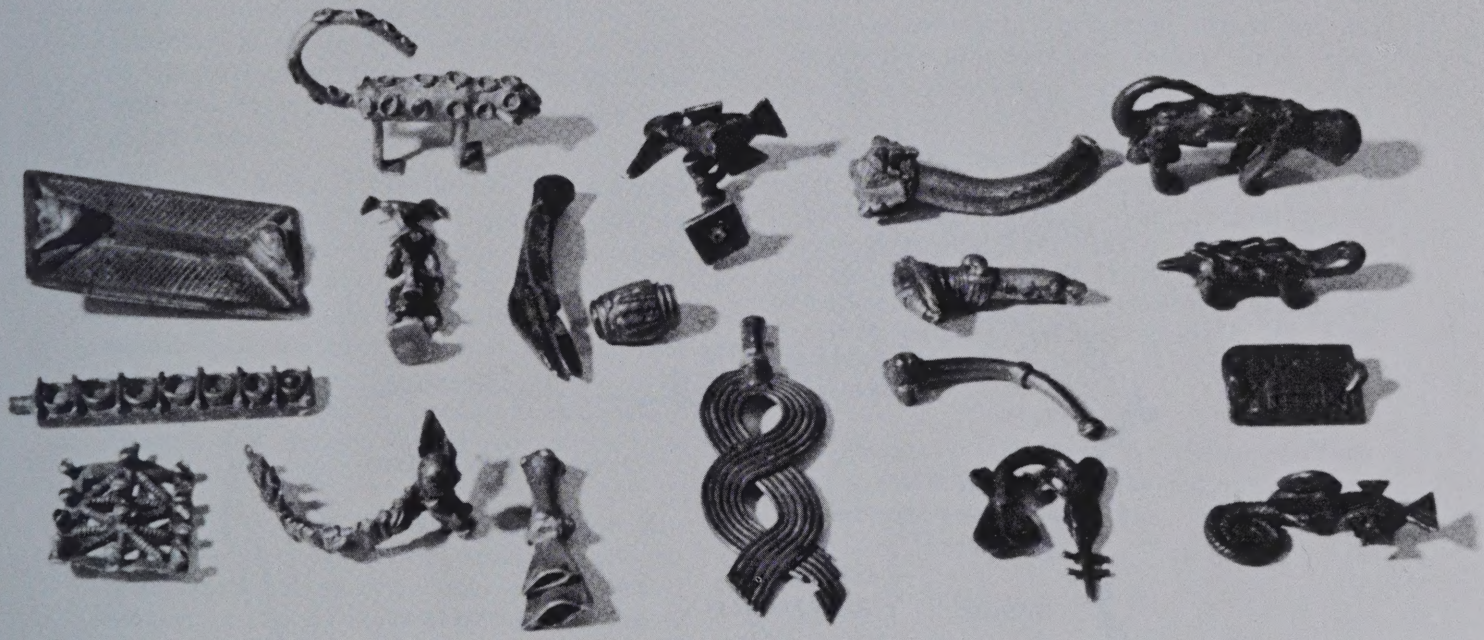
146 GEOMETRIC GOLD WEIGHTS. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, all less than 2 in. long.

Geometric weights are in several shapes—rectangular, square, triangular, hexagonal, and pyramidal. The bottoms are usually plain; the tops, ornamented with designs in relief. Among the motifs shown are spirals, comb-shapes, waves, and zigzag lines. Geometric weights are thought to have originated earlier than figurative forms.

147 SCOOP AND SPOONS. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, all less than 5 in.

Spoons with small bowls, and sometimes long handles to facilitate passage through the strings of the scales, were used to convey gold dust from boxes to the balance pans. The handles were often incised or stamped with designs. Scoops, similar to wide spoons with rims, were used to separate impurities from the gold dust and as funnels for pouring gold into narrow-necked jars.

148



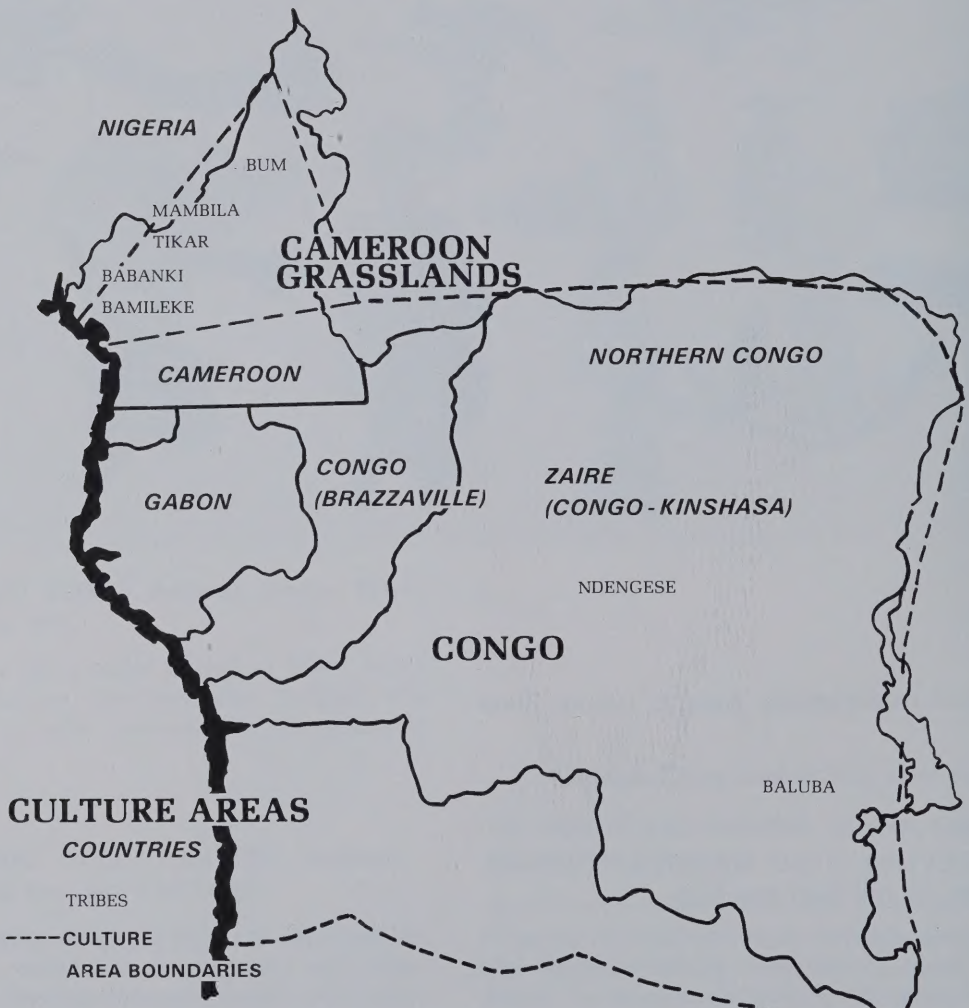
149

148 LIDDED CONTAINER. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass 3 in.

Brass boxes were used to hold gold weights.

149 FIGURATIVE GOLD WEIGHTS. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, all less than 3 in. long.

Many weights are miniature replicas of items of everyday use, royal insignia, plants, animals, and humans. Among the objects shown are a shield, wari game board, shield frame, leopards, birds, cartridge belt, drum, double gong, elephant tail whisk, trumpets decorated with trophy jaws, sawfish, and a bird with a snake. Many weights illustrate proverbs, for example a shield frame: "When a shield wears out the framework remains," meaning, men die but their deeds live on; wari game board: "A stranger does not play wari."


NIGERIA
BUM
MAMBILA
TIKAR
BABANKI
BAMILEKE
CAMEROON GRASSLANDS
CAMEROON
NORTHERN CONGO
GABON
CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE)
ZAIRE (CONGO-KINSHASA)
NDENGESE
CONGO
BALUBA
CULTURE AREAS
COUNTRIES
TRIBES
----CULTURE AREA BOUNDARIES

CAMEROON-CONGO

CAMEROON-CONGO CULTURE AREA

The Cameroon-Congo culture area, having at its heart the Congo basin, extends from the Atlantic east to the lakes and south to include most of Angola and western Zambia. Cameroon is here included with the Congo, although it shows relationships to the Guinea Coast and Western Sudan areas and may be considered a transitional area.

Most peoples of the area speak Bantu languages. Culturally and physically, as well as linguistically, they are differentiated from the Pygmies who form a few enclaves in the Congo.

The major mode of subsistence in the northern forested half of the Congo is shifting cultivation utilizing the hoe. Root crops, such as yams, sweet potatoes, and cassava, are of major importance; bananas or plantaines also contribute to the diet. In the savanna of the southern half of the area cultivation of grains predominates, while hunting and fishing supplement other subsistence activities.

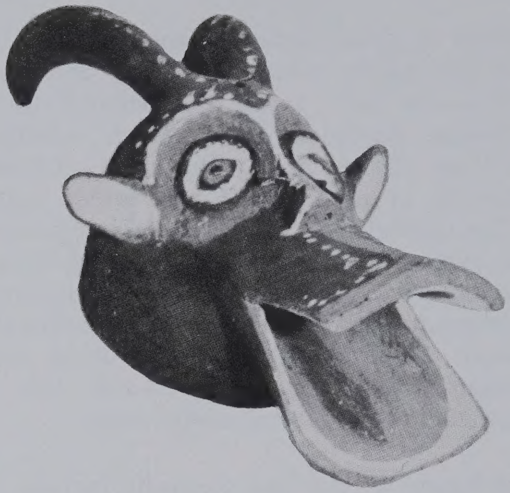
A variety of craft specialists organized into guilds is common. Their products are exchanged, using several types of aboriginal money, in the markets and through itinerant traders. Money is also used for discharging bride wealth obligations.

Northern Congo peoples trace descent patrilineally, residence is patrilocal, and the extended family is usually an important unit. In the southern portion, known as the "matrilineal belt," descent is counted in the maternal line; here postmarital residence is usually with the wife's family.

Politically, there are gradations from one or a few autonomous villages, organized as tribes, to kingdoms. Complexly organized states like the Kongo and Kuba irregularly dot the Congo. They seem to have developed by accretion and conquest from the more typical small decentralized political units surrounding them. In most of the Cameroon-Congo the village, with farms often at some distance, consists of a core of unilineally related kinsmen and constitutes the basic social and political unit. A lineage headman and council administer village affairs. Such villages may be autonomous or losely combined under a chief. The centralized states are held together by a system of chiefs and local deputies responsible to the king. Secret associations, frequently having significant political as well as religious functions, often act as important adjuncts to formal law and courts in maintaining social order.

Religions of the area generally include a belief in a supreme but remote deity who, as the creator, presides over a number of gods controlling the forces of nature and spirits associated with the hunt, forests, and fertility. Divination and ancestor worship, as well as tribal or village initiation, are also part of the religious life of the Cameroon-Congo.

As in the other western African culture areas, art is frequently inspired by religious belief and ritual and has attained high levels of production.



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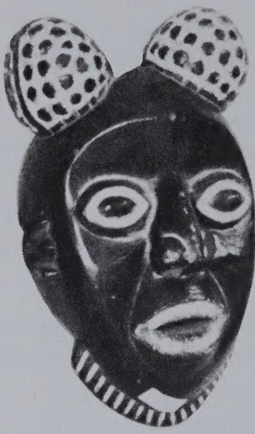


151

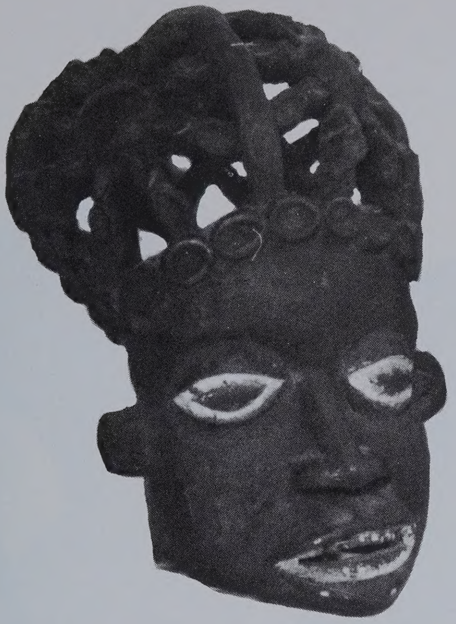
There is considerable stylistic homogeneity in Cameroon Grasslands carving, thus rendering positive identification difficult. Some of the diagnostic features of the masks are large round faces with wide-set eyes, flaring nostrils, and open mouth with prominent teeth. The cheeks are usually round and bulging. A large headdress carved of figures or fretwork frequently surmounts the mask. Much of Grasslands art was produced for use in the courts of kings or by secret societies.

150 ANTELOPE MASK. Mambila, Nigeria-Cameroon. Wood, pigment, 19 in.

The name of this mask is suah buah (big dance) and it is used only by and for men in connection with agricultural activities, or with a costume of feathers at funerals.

151 HELMET MASK. Bum, Cameroon. Wood, pigment, 13 in.

This early classic-style mask has a less flamboyant appearance than number 152. The black color is due to patination achieved by rubbing the mask with soot and palm oil. Most Grasslands masks are used in annual sowing and harvesting festivals.



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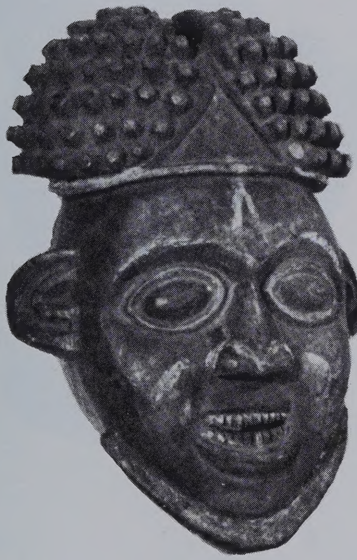

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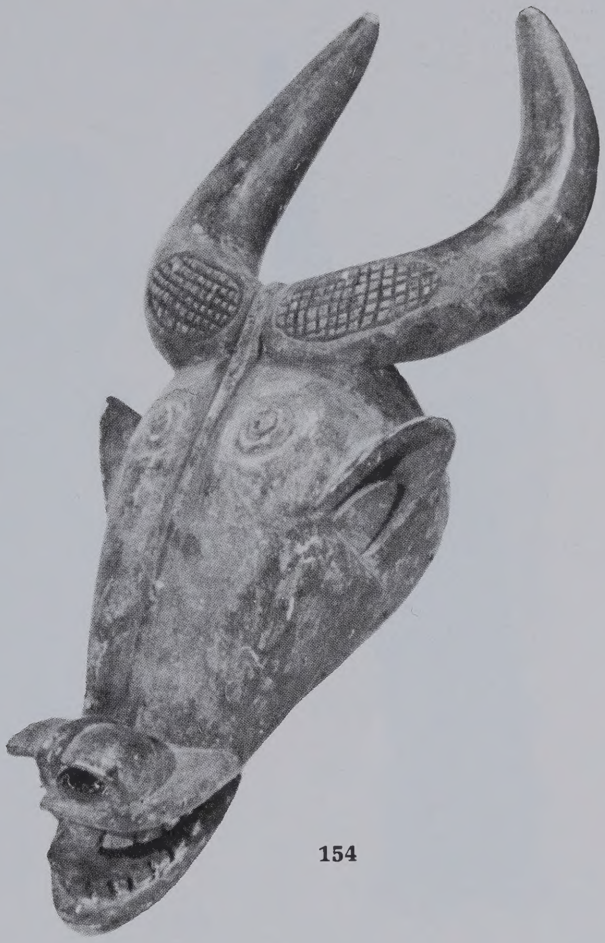


154

152 HELMET MASK. Babanki, Cameroon. Wood, pigment, 16 in.

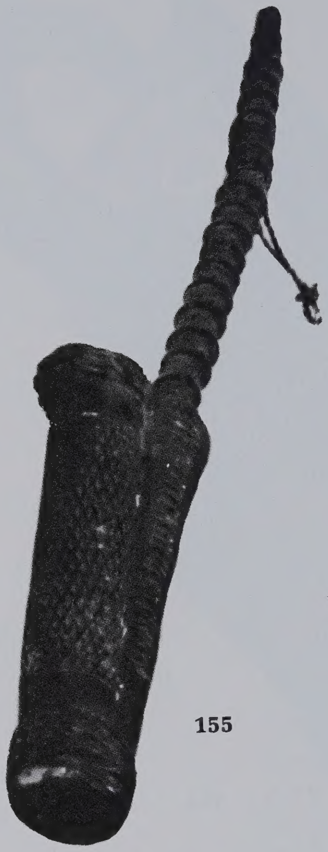
The mask in the classic Grasslands style has a superstructure in a stylized spider motif and carved cowrie shells. The spider is considered as a mediator between the spirit world and man.

153 MASK. Babanki, Cameroon. Wood, pigment, encrustation, 16 in.

This 19th century piece shows the typical eyes with accentuated pupils and semicircular projecting ears. The head is topped by a tufted headdress or hairdo.

154 BUSH COW MASK. Bamileke, Cameroon. Wood, 29 in.

The bush cow, a favorite subject of representation by Grasslands peoples, shows a typical Grasslands style with sizeable head, inward-curving horns, long snout with large nostrils, and open mouth exposing teeth. Originally such masks were used in hunting.



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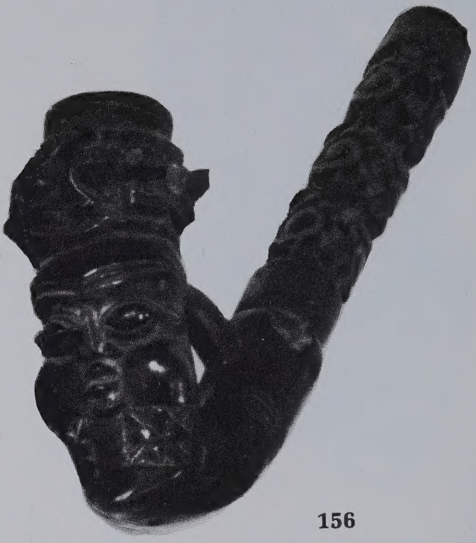

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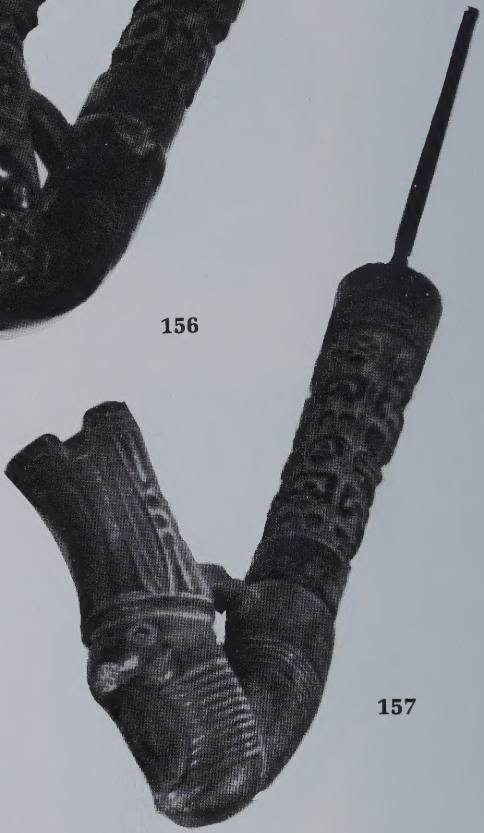
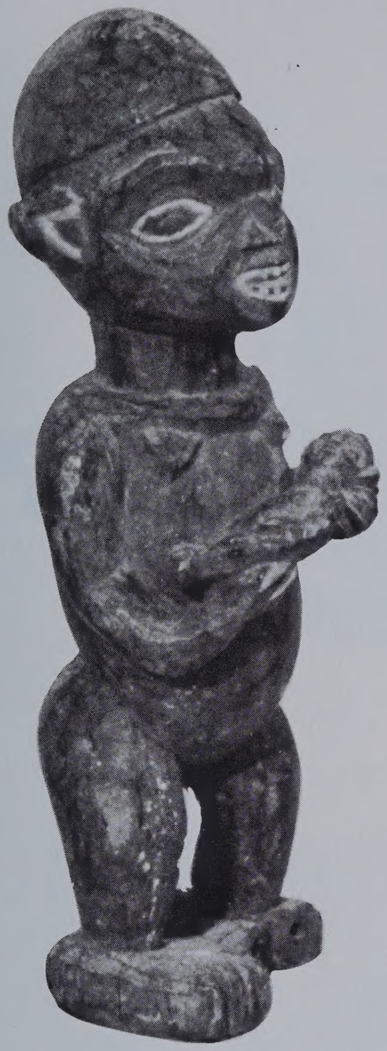


157

155 - 156 - 157 PIPES. Bamum, Cameroon. Pottery, wood, metal, 20 in.; 13 in.; 19 in.

Pipes used for secular smoking are decorated with heads, figures, and designs carved from a solid chunk of clay. The pottery pipe bowl of number 155 shows a common abstract floral design. Number 156 has the classic facial features of large Grasslands masks; the spider motif is carved on its stem.



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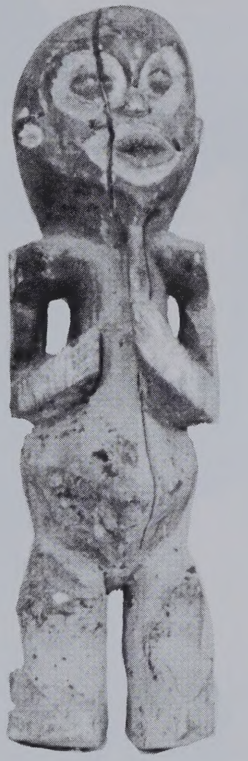

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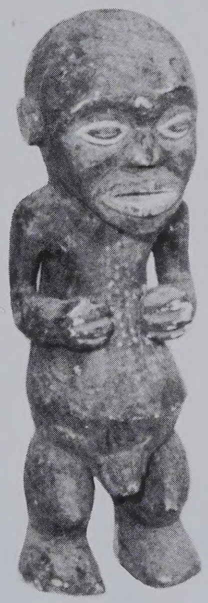


160

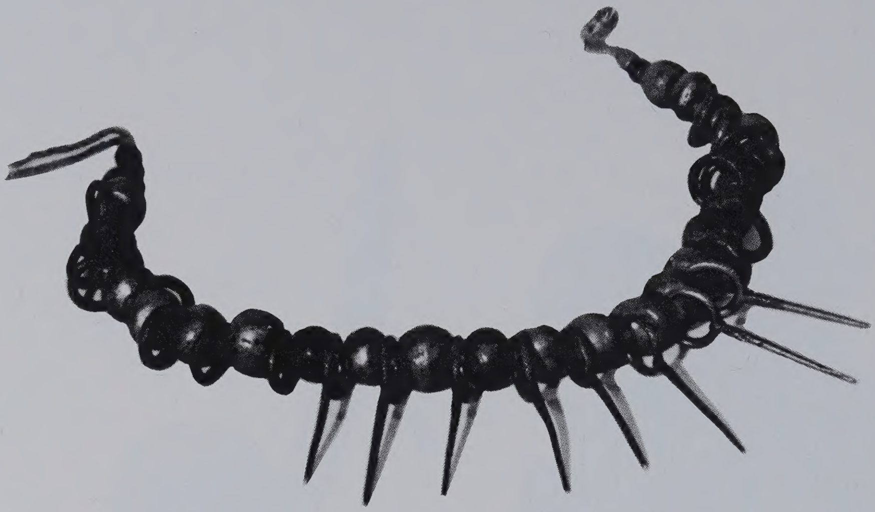
158 MATERNITY FIGURE. Bamum, Cameroon. Wood, encrustation, 21 in.

This 19th century maternity figure is typical of Bamum standing figures belonging to the royal palaces. Most Grasslands figures are associated with the ancestor cults.

159 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Mambila, Nigeria-Cameroon. Wood, pigment, 21 in.

The Mambila are distinctive in their use of soft wood for carvings. The male ancestor guardian figure (females are also made) is used to ward off evil spirits and protect the family treasure. They are sometimes kept in miniature twig houses or used to guard palm trees in the making of palm wine.

160 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Mambila, Nigeria-Cameroon. Wood, pigment, 18 in.



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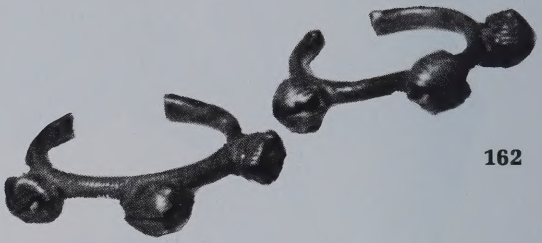

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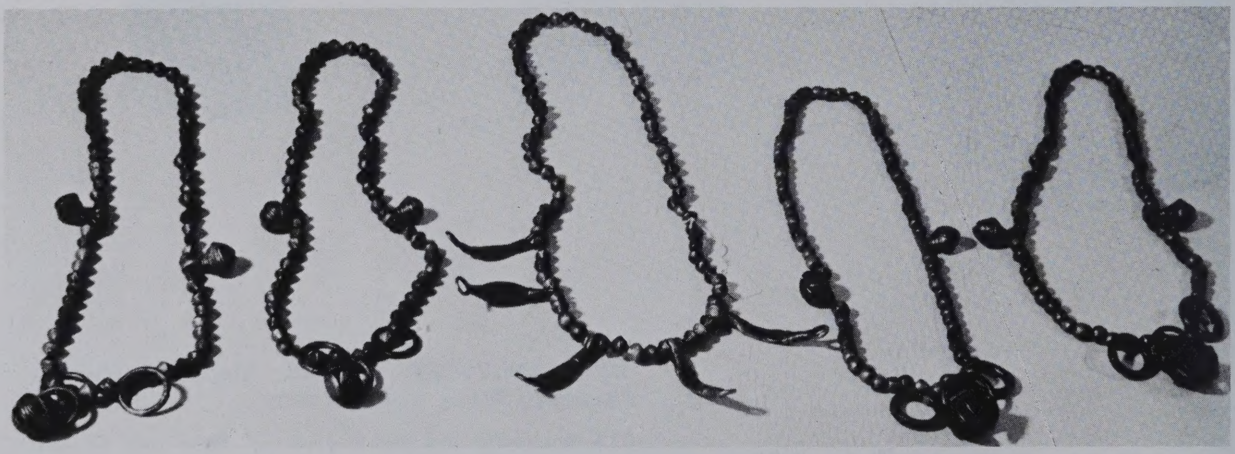


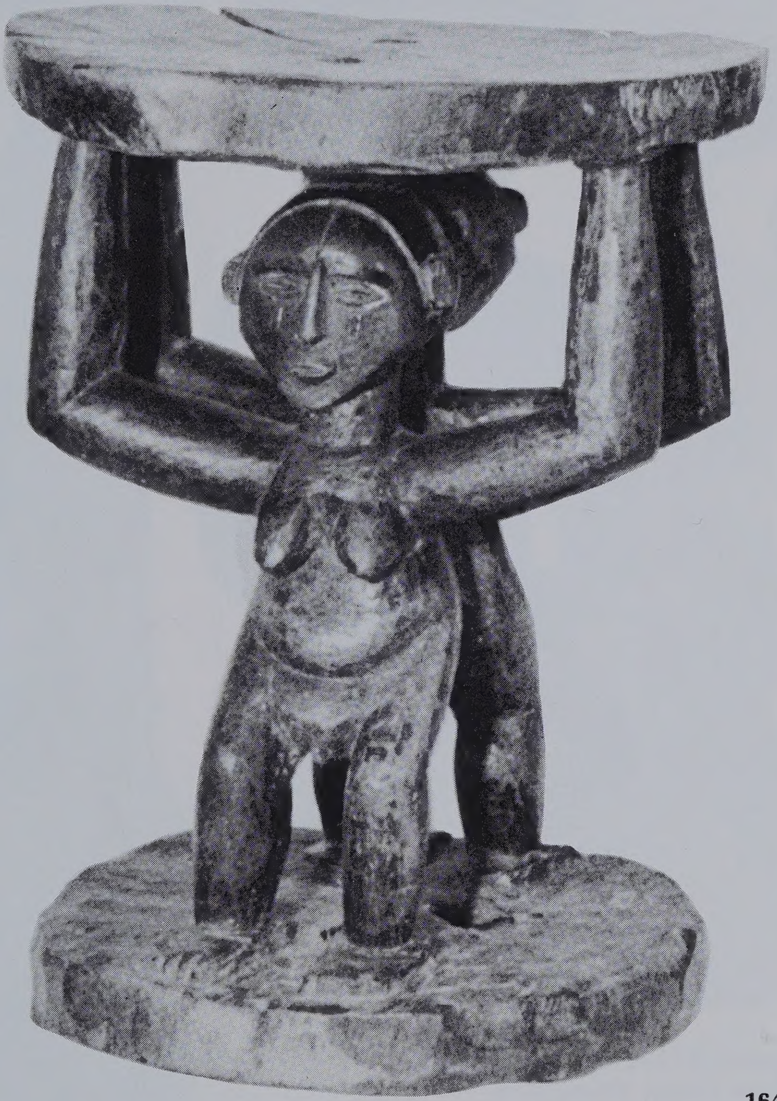
163

161 CHASTITY GIRDLE. Tikar, Cameroon. Brass, 27 in.

The heavy girdle shown here consists of large brass beads, rings, and spiked rings; it is worn around the waist.

162 WRISTLETS WITH RATTLES. Tikar, Cameroon. Brass, 5 in.

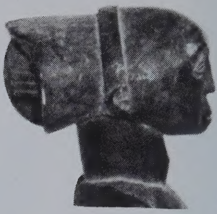
163 NECKLACES AND GIRDLE. Tikar, Cameroon. Brass, all 30 in.



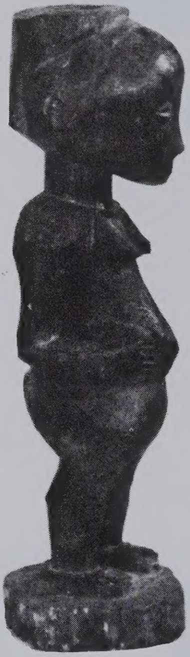
164

164 STOOL. Baluba, Congo. Wood, 17 in.

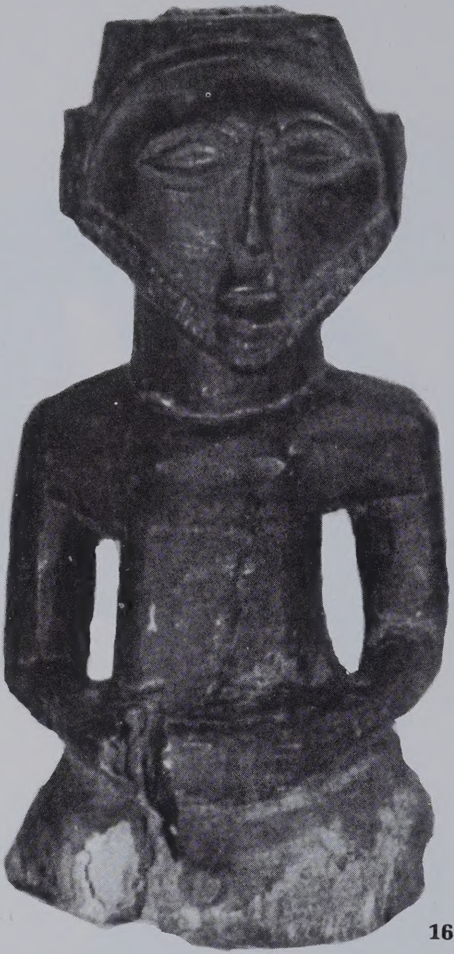
Clan elders, chiefs, and other important persons sit upon carved stools for ceremonial occasions. Typically the seat of Baluba stools is supported by kneeling or standing figures with arms upraised. This piece has a man and woman back to back.



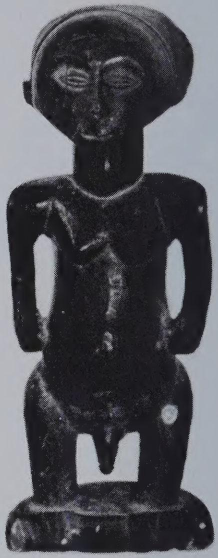
167a



165



166



167

165 STANDING FEMALE FETISH WITH MEDICINE IN HEAD. Baluba, Congo. Wood, 19 in.

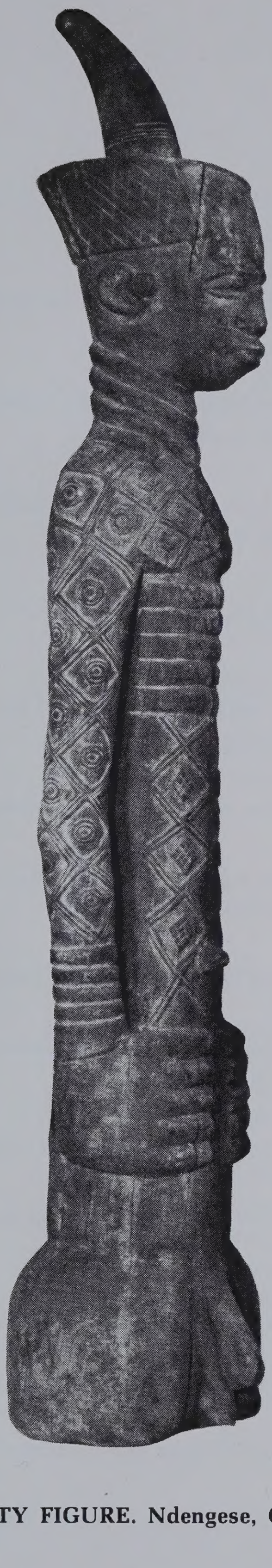
166 FETISH TORSO. Baluba, Congo. Wood, 15 in.

Figures deriving magical power for good or evil from substances contained within them or attached to them are commonly called fetishes. This fine 19th century torso of a bearded male has a receptacle in the head for magic material.

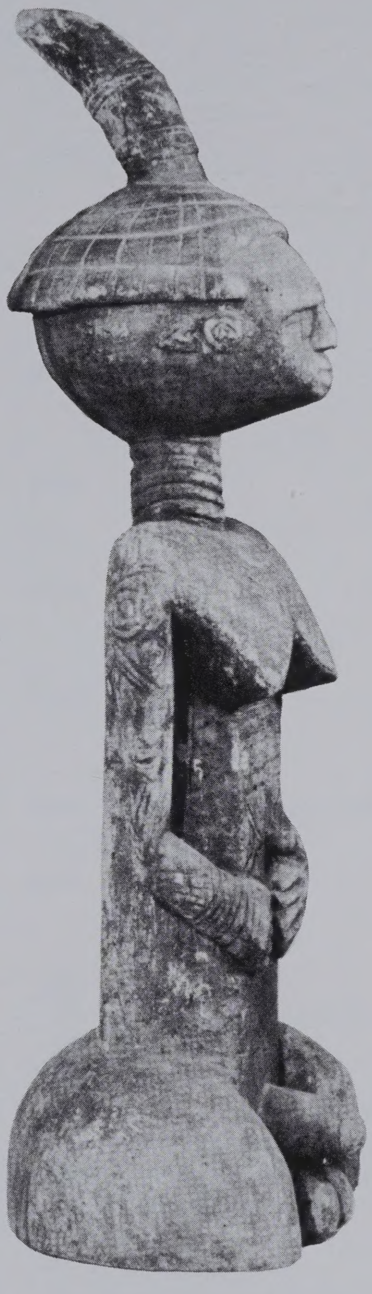
167 ANCESTOR FIGURE. Baluba, Congo. Wood, 17 in.

Baluba figures often have an elongated torso with stout legs. The coiffure, low forehead curving to the hairline, and flat-bridged nose are typical of the Baluba style.

167a ANCESTOR FIGURE (Detail of number 167).



168



169

169 **ROYALTY FIGURE. NDengese, Congo. Wood, 38 in.**

168 **ROYALTY FIGURE. Ndengese, Congo. Wood, 45 in.**

Although called royalty figures, on the assumption that they are modeled after similar figures made by the Bakuba of the Kuba kingdom, it is uncertain what they represent. Perhaps they are symbols of both divine and earthly power rather than a portrait of a specific king. Or they may represent ancestors. These figures have rich geometrical ornamentation. Among the Bakuba, it is reported, each king had such a carved effigy. At the time of his death it was placed beside him in order to absorb his spiritual power. His successor then lay with the statue before assuming office so that he could absorb this power for himself.

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WESTERN SUDAN CULTURE AREA

170 ANTELOPE MASK. Bobo, Mali. Wood, polychrome, raffia, 19 in.

171 ANTELOPE MASK. Kurumba, Upper Volta, Mali. Wood, polychrome, 29 in.

172 MASK WITH FIGURATED SUPERSTRUCTURE. Mossi, Upper Volta. Wood, 52 in.

173 MASK WITH SUPERSTRUCTURE. Gurunsi, Ghana. Wood, polychrome, raffia, 31 in.

174 FIRESPITTER MASK. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, polychrome, 26 in.

175 DOOR. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, 49 in.

176 DRUM. Senufo, Ivory Coast. Wood, hide, 32 in.

177 LARGE MARIONETTE. Bambara, Mali. Wood, metal, 33 in.

178-179 FIGURES. Lobi, Upper Volta. Wood, 21 in. and 22 in.

180 STAFF WITH HORSE AND RIDER. Bambara, Mali. Iron, 32 in.

181 NECKLACES. Tribe unknown. Carnelian, all under 36 in.

GUINEA COAST CULTURE AREA

182 KPLEKPLE MASK. Baule, Ivory Coast. Wood, 29 in.

183 MMWO MASK. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, cloth, 19 in.

184 MATERNITY FIGURE. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, beads, metal, shell, cloth, 21 in.

185 - 186 - 187 FERTILITY CHARMS. Fanti, Ghana. Wood, beads, 11 in. to 13 in.

188 IKENGA SHRINE FIGURE. Ibo, Nigeria. Wood, polychrome, 14 in.

189 - 190 - 191 - 192 ANCESTOR FIGURES. Ibibio (Oron clan), Nigeria. Wood, 32 in., 44 in., 48 in., 31 in.

193 FIGURE. Benin, Nigeria. Bronze, 13 in.

194 FEMALE FIGURE. Ibibio, Nigeria. Wood, pigment, 26 in.

195 CEREMONIAL SWORD. Ashanti, Ghana. Iron, gold leaf, 26 in.

196 SANDALS. Ashanti, Ghana. Leather, wood, gold leaf, 12 in.

197 - 198 SKULL CASES. Yoruba, Nigeria. Hide, cowries, mirrors, 18 in., hide, cowries, beads, 12 in.

199 FIGURATED CEREMONIAL ADZE. Ashanti, Ghana. Brass, 14 in.

200 DRUM. Ashanti, Ghana. Wood, polychrome, hide, 42 in.

201 ANTELOPE HORNS. Ashanti, Ghana. Horn, hide, 19 in.

202 - 203 ARMLETS. Baule, Ivory Coast. Brass, all less than 7 in.

CAMEROON-CONGO CULTURE AREA

204 ELEPHANT MASK. Bamum, Cameroon. Wood, 29 in.

205 MASK. Bamum, Cameroon. Bronze, 14 in.

206 HELMET MASK. Bamum, Cameroon. Wood covered with cowries, beads, 31 in.

207 - 208 PIPES. Cameroon Grasslands. Brass, 11 in. and 10 in.

209 STAFF WITH JANUS HEAD. Cameroon Grasslands. Wood, 56 in.

210 FIGURATED STAFF. Cameroon Grasslands. Wood, 50 in.

211 DRUM. Bamileke, Cameroon. Wood, hide, fiber, 42 in.

212 BASKETRY VESSEL. Bamum, Cameroon. Wood base, cord, 19 in.

213 - 214 MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES. Bamum, Cameroon. Brass, 30 in. and 25 in.

215 FIGURES WITH STAVES. Bamum, Cameroon. Ivory, 18 in.

216 FRENCH LEGIONNAIRE FIGURE. Cameroon Grasslands. Wood, 18 in.

217 FEMALE FIGURE. Bamum, Cameroon. Wood covered with cowries, beads, 32 in.

218 MALE FIGURE WITH GUN. Congo. Wood, 24 in.

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